

THE MANDATE OF HEAVEN:
HOW THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY EVOLVED FROM COMMUNIST TO
FASCIST AND NEO-IMPERIALIST AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR GREAT POWER
COMPETITION

by
James L. Hill

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Abstract

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has exploited the West's, and in particular the United States, constant need for economic growth by expanding the market. It knew that using the freedoms and values of the West against it with promises of access to Chinese markets and cheap and abundant labor would cause the Western elite to unwittingly take up the cause for China against their governments. Because of this knowledge, China has willingly and wantonly abused human rights, shifted to a more totalitarian, religion-like, and fascist governance style, used its influence to interfere in the political systems of other countries, reneged on international agreements, created vassal-like states, and created a system where racism and bigotry are seen as patriotic. All this to remake the CCP in the Chinese dynasties of old images, the center of the world with the mandate of heaven.

The CCP's power over the West began in earnest in the late 2000s when it was decided that international influence campaigns would be used outside of China. These efforts were primarily led by economic interests to which the West quickly succumbed. The stronger the economic ties between a country and China, the more aggressive China's influence operations became. China now employs a whole of government approach to change norms and influence global policies - media, academia, pop culture, business, as well as the more traditional diplomatic efforts of political and economic relations. The CCP has spread the message to the Chinese diaspora that no matter where in the world they may be, they belong to China. Chinese leaders continually use images of war and conquest against the West in their public speeches. Still, the West sits idly by, cowed mainly by economic considerations while the CCP actively encourages the theft of

intellectual property and market share and is well on its way to winning the global norms war.

Advisors/Panelists: Dorothea Israel Wolfson, Ph.D., and Kathy Wagner Hill, Ph.D.

Readers: Brett M. Decker, Ph.D., and Dr. Alexander Rosenthal, Ph.D.

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Introduction: “The supreme Art of War is to subdue the enemy without fighting”¹

The Questions

China’s current trajectory is a threat to world order as defined since World War II as American-lead, Western values such as freedom of speech, human rights, and anti-authoritarianism. This paper will answer the following questions:

Is modern China a socialist, communist, or another type of authoritarian government and why does it matter?

What type of behaviors does China exhibit that makes it such a threat to Western values and why does it matter?

Why would China exhibit these behaviors and not be satisfied with ruling its territory and why does it matter?

The Answers

It is common sense to call China communist, after all, “communist” is in the name of the only political party in China. And yet, in the first chapter of this study, it will be revealed that the CCP’s increasingly jingoistic speech, ideology, and domestic and foreign actions are much closer to that of fascism than communism. In the first chapter, modern CCP thoughts and actions are compared to World War II Italian Fascism and the differences are difficult to discern. Understanding the CCP’s fascist leanings will help academics and policy makers better forecast China’s behavior. For example, if the West had been understanding China’s fascist intentions the early takeover of Hong Kong and the abrogation of the China-British treaty would have been foreseen. Similarly, China’s

¹ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Goodreads, accessed July 05, 2021, https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/1771.Sun_Tzu.

invasion of the South China Sea in breach of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) could have been anticipated. A broad acceptance of China as a fascist country would have ramifications in all social science spheres and would ripple through almost every aspect of modern society. It would destroy the CCP's public image both at home and abroad.

China is essential in today's world. The country supplies companies around the world with raw materials of all kinds and consumers of every mass-market product. The CCP has brought tens of millions of their people out of poverty. And yet, it seems not enough to be on the cusp of having the world's largest economy. When your foundation is revolution, you must be continually fighting or else you will fail. Such is the quandary of the modern CCP. The internal battles are nearly finished and they must find the next fight. But China will not enter the next fight blindly as they have already laid the groundwork for it. China has spent hundreds of millions of dollars in an attempt to control foreign media and the message those outlets spread, and it is not just going after national-level organizations. In Chapter 2, several of China's foreign influence campaigns in the United States are reviewed. In particular, China's work in a relatively small regional newspaper in Iowa is studied to reveal that China may have been manipulating Iowans in an attempt to both punish President Trump and sway U.S. federal trade policy.

In the third and final chapter, the study turns to Chinese actions that invoke the shadow of imperialism. From economic debt-trap diplomacy to pandemic politics, the CCP has shown that its revolution has not ended and constant struggle and fighting with neighbors and the rest of the world is inevitable. Furthermore, China will continue to

push its figurative and literal boundaries as it attempts to keep the flames of revolution alive. China does not want to be one among many hegemons or in a position of sharing power. Sharing means that you are not in control. The CCP's end goal is to revive the glory of the past as the center of the world, the Middle Kingdom, where all pay homage and tribute. In this world, Western values either cease to exist, or they are only applied when the CCP does not factor into the equation.

It may be too late and the challenge for the West to overcome what China has become but it is not too late to stop China from ultimately setting global norms. Decoupling does not seem realistic, given the interconnectedness of the global economy. However, countries that espouse human rights and rule of law values may consider economic and political censuring of human rights abusers. Countries or economic blocs should counter Chinese economic proposals with their own. Individual countries should offer incentives to businesses to either move out of China or protect them against CCP influence when they do operate in China and shield them from censorship. If governments have firm reasons why Chinese businesses should not be allowed to compete in their respective countries, this information should be given to the court of public opinion. This latter recommendation is probably the easiest and best route. The CCP is extremely sensitive to public opinion, one of the reasons it demands censorship in social media platforms, by calling out and labeling Chinese actions for what they are (fascist, neo-imperialist, meddling in the domestic affairs of other countries, etc.) the CCP would be forced to regulate those actions.

The Dream, The Mandate

“China’s leader, Xi Jinping, is pursuing a strategy to make the country’s economy more self-sufficient while making other places more dependent on it than ever.”²

In Chinese history, the Mandate of Heaven is the divine right to rule everything that the emperor could see. The Zhou Dynasty in the early 1000s B.C. claimed it and it has subsequently been claimed by every ruling government in China. However, it was not absolute, when conditions for the people turned bad, whether natural or man-made reasons, it was said that the governors had lost the mandate and thus were ripe to be overthrown. The CCP, in its current quasi-religious leanings such as labeling historic CCP locations as “holy sites,” has claimed the Mandate of Heaven to rule over all it sees.³

Following President Nixon’s visit to China in the 1970s the West, and in particular the United States, expected China to follow Western-created norms of international relations and economics. The hope was that China would acknowledge the superiority of liberal democracy as the benefits of trade and accompanying prosperity rolled in giving the average Chinese person a taste of the West. Indeed, that a more prosperous Chinese people would demand democracy and Western values. Fifty years since those expectations are still only expectations.

² Steven Lee Myers and Keith Bradsher, “China Says It Remains Open to the World, but Wants to Dictate Terms,” *The New York Times*, November 23, 2020, accessed June 28, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/23/world/asia/china-xi-jinping-globalization.html>.

³ Javier C. Hernández, “‘Follow the Party Forever’: China Plans a Communist Birthday Bash,” *New York Times*, April 19, 2021, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/19/world/asia/china-communist-party-anniversary.html>

Instead of joining the current international order of democratic nations at the top of the global power lists, China's authoritarian model in economics is pushing out the old guard and usurping what analysts thought was common sense and the right way to do go about being a global power. The CCP is not only sharing its economic model throughout the world but also its ideology of a new set of international norms. China buys allies with cheap loans while simultaneously stealing territory, intellectual property (IP), and values from them.⁴⁵ It says that it wants peace and prosperity for all but militarizes and closes air and sea spaces at a rate the rest of the world struggles to keep up.

Current Chinese leaders are constantly using words and phrases like “national rejuvenation,” “China Dream,” and “return to the center of the world.”⁴⁶ A return to the Ming Dynasty's greatness and heights. From the 1300s through the 1600s the Ming Dynasty, though vastly different geographically than today's China, ruled through cultural and economic accomplishments. Countries as far as Africa paid tribute to China and it had an unrivaled navy and navigational understandings that European counterparts could not comprehend. The navy had seen so much of the world that the Ming Emperors believed that nothing else could match it and decided that the outside world was not

⁴ Al Jazeera. “Southeast Asia Wary on China, Belt and Road Initiative: Survey.” News | Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera, January 7, 2019. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/01/southeast-asia-wary-china-belt-road-initiative-survey-190107030233089.html>.

⁵ Shiro Armstrong, “Assessing the Scale and Potential of Chinese Investment Overseas: An Econometric Approach,” *China & World Economy* 19, no. 4 (August 2, 2011), accessed February 26, 2021, doi:10.1111/j.1749-124x.2011.01248.x, p.22-37.

⁶ Liu Hong and Ying Chen, *XI JINPING ERA: His Comprehensive Strategy toward the China Dream*, comp. James Hsung (New York, NY: CN Times Books, 2015), 10.

worth engaging it was so beneath the Chinese people. Following this time of greatness, the West forced Chinese engagement and humiliated them in doing so. The CCP, and current Chinese President Xi Jinping in particular, felt this abdication by the Ming Dynasty had cost future generations their birthright as the culture, political, military, and economic leaders of the world.⁷ Even worse than denying them their right, this abdication has caused generations of Chinese to lose face with the rest of the world. But now, China is in a place to right the wrongs of the past and to take back what was stolen from it and repay past humiliations. To return the dream, ignite the rejuvenation, and return to its rightful place as the center of the world.

Despite the West's and the United States' best efforts engagement has not worked in the way intended. The CCP continues to become more hostile externally and more totalitarian internally. Time and economic improvements have not caused a freedom movement in China; rather, they have allowed the CCP to entrench itself in almost every aspect of daily life in China and more and more into the daily lives of non-Chinese. The American policy to change China that was first introduced by President Nixon has failed and the longer the U.S. takes to understand this already decided fact, the more damage is done. As former CCP instructor Cai Xia bluntly states:

The leaders of the Chinese Communist Party not only used the engagement policy to create favorable conditions for achieving their goals, but they also never flinched on the sensitive and complex issues concerning CCP rule. For their part, American leaders, out of goodwill and wishful thinking, intentionally or unintentionally, covered up or ignored some sensitive and complex issues (mainly concerning civil and political rights and Taiwan), and at times even used ambiguous wording to make de facto concessions.⁸

⁷ Ibid. 3.

⁸ Cia Xia, "China-US Relations In The Eyes Of The Chinese Communist Party: An Insider's Perspective," Hoover Institution, June 29, 2021, accessed July 08, 2021,

During the West's period of engagement, the CCP used the time to entrench itself in supply lines throughout the world and create new norms of how things were manufactured and what it meant to do business in China. Instead of confronting these changes, Western leaders used vague and vacillating policies which were accommodating China's new rules.

At Johns Hopkins University, then-President Clinton noted in a speech, "By joining the WTO, China ... is agreeing to import... economic freedom."⁹ However, China never feared the West's talk of change as they knew that capitalist impulses would drive Western customers to them. Indeed, China knew and planned on capitalism turning on its institutions - making Western companies and the elite willingly attack the very norms that created their wealth and their positions of power on behalf of, even if unknowingly, the CCP.

Much like the West-Soviet struggle was as much geopolitical-realism as it was ideological, so is the West-Sino battle, with each attempting to win hearts and minds. Certainly, both are necessary to understand China's rise and ambitions. John Mearsheimer observed that China is doing what rational states do - pursue power to protect itself in a zero-sum anarchic system.¹⁰ However, the CCP's ideology feeds into this power pursuit regardless of what China's espoused political system is. As of this

<https://www.hoover.org/research/china-us-relations-eyes-chinese-communist-party-insiders-perspective-zhong-gong-yan-zhong>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: Norton, 2014), 368.

writing, Xi Jinping Thought is the mandated curriculum throughout Chinese society which promotes faithfulness to the Party over everything else. Surely this is a combining of ideology and realism to face the current and future difficulties that China will have in an anarchic system.

China is nearing a point where it does not need the West or the United States beyond that of a customer. It has developed its domestic economy and brought it from a developing country and cheap labor source to a technological leader in many areas. The current era of Chinese leadership saw its opening and took it after decades of waiting patiently.

Engagement, Appeasement, Abdication, Redemption?

The West has fueled China's rise. Decades of believing that Western values had prevailed also lent to a lack of concern about what China was doing behind the scenes. Indeed, the West is guilty of what the Ming Dynasty did, abandoning part of the world because of its hubris that nothing could challenge it. While the West was preoccupied with other things, the CCP increased China's geographical borders and influence. However, since the Tiananmen Square incident on 5 June 1989, the CCP ideology changed from socialism and communism to something different. The CCP is haunted by the failures of the past and it drives them with a fever-like determination to control everything that might cause them to lose control, thus falling like the Ming Dynasty fell and repeating history.

In this small timeframe for China to exert its control, the CCP must usurp the old-world order and replace it with its own. Time is against the CCP, they must have overwhelming proof that their system is superior while its economy is strong, before their

population ages, and before other countries understand that China is playing a zero-sum game - if China wins, everyone else loses. To hurry things along as quickly as possible, China will lie, cheat, and steal, or any other means to the end. The CCP is using subterfuge to belie its motives and conceal its desires via a whole-of-government approach, including public and private society, that is unparalleled in world history to achieve the China Dream. The China Dream and the CCP's goals run counter to Western ideals and values.

Why does the CCP have a zero-sum outlook? Because its power is derived from domestic stability. Increases in international recognition and perceived global strength lend credence to its domestic strength. Instability domestically and internationally causes chaos and chaos would be the end of the CCP. It is not like a party in a democracy that may lose an election cycle but regain power the next, it is all or nothing. If the CCP loses power for a season, it is all over.

What are some of the norms the CCP wishes to change? According to the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The rights to subsistence and development are superior to human rights. This is the viewpoint of human rights with Chinese characteristics - sovereign rights are superior to human rights."¹¹ If China, as a world power, has its own set of norms, how is the rest of the world supposed to compete? It cannot and this is the crux of China's zero-sum game philosophy. In this regard, China will continue to change

¹¹ Cia Xia, "China-US Relations In The Eyes Of The Chinese Communist Party: An Insider's Perspective," Hoover Institution, June 29, 2021, accessed July 08, 2021, <https://www.hoover.org/research/china-us-relations-eyes-chinese-communist-party-insiders-perspective-zhong-gong-yan-zhong>.

international norms and conventions to suit its objectives which include the censoring of Western values and freedoms.

One of China's main methods of attack is to accuse other countries of exactly what it is doing. Specifically, using Western laws and values against the West, constantly openly reminding the West of past sins, for example, slavery and racism, while the CCP uses Uyghur slave labor inside of China and repressing other ethnic and religious minorities to the point of being labeled genocide and local officials have been instructed by the highest levels of CCP leadership to show "no mercy" to non-Han minorities.¹² The most homegrown internal descent inside of China is often labeled as foreign interference while Chinese Government-backed Confucius Institutes and Unified Front offices sow discord in foreign lands using the media and press of the host country.

According to Cai, the CCP has mastered the art of playing the victim. According to her, someone that taught the technique to the regime's leaders, if China accuses one country of doing something deceptive, that means that that is what China is doing.¹³ Cai continues that these contradictory actions are needed because the "Party's ideology is contradictory, inconsistent, and inferior" that changes whenever the Party needs it to.¹⁴ She concluded that the West needs to judge China by its actions, not its flowery and

¹² Phoebe Sedgman and Jing Li, "China Eyes Rare Earth Export Curbs for U.S. Defense, FT Says," Bloomberg.com, February 16, 2021, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-02-16/china-eyes-rare-earth-export-curbs-for-u-s-defense-sector-ft-kl719uxb>

¹³ Cia Xia, "China-US Relations In The Eyes Of The Chinese Communist Party: An Insider's Perspective," Hoover Institution, June 29, 2021, accessed July 08, 2021, <https://www.hoover.org/research/china-us-relations-eyes-chinese-communist-party-insiders-perspective-zhong-gong-yan-zhong>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

fawning words, as the CCP has a different definition of morality that only involves doing what is best for the Party.¹⁵ If one is sure and confident in oneself, you do not need to play deceptive shell games.

The CCP has created a surveillance state that is unrivaled in the modern world and harkens back to the fascist states of World War II and has begun exporting the technology to willing client states around the world. Government propaganda is a part of daily life for the Chinese people and it is quickly becoming the norm for other countries to censor their people on behalf of the Chinese regime. China's controlling actions inside China are better understood than those outside of China, though they follow the same pattern. Just like domestic China has a social credit score and system, so do foreign countries. If a country or company wants to have relations with China, they must subjugate themselves to China's rules. This is a return to the ancient Chinese tradition of tributes and is the core of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Made in China 2025.

Made in China 2025 is intended to make China technologically independent by 2025. To do so, China has forced Western companies operating in China to cede IP to the government. In turn, China uses the IP to create a domestic version of the product. Thus, China overcomes decades of experimentation and innovation to catch up to their Western counterparts.¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

The BRI, ostensibly billed as economic and infrastructure aid, puts Chinese-owned or operated ports in geopolitical strategic locations. It also saddles the receiving country with billions of dollars in debt with conditions so stringent that the country often defaults before the project is even complete and allowing China to take control of the project and territory. This form of debt-trap diplomacy is also a form of neo-imperialism as it is mostly aimed at poor, developing countries. Although the BRI is described as a win for everyone, really it is a zero-sum game with China forcing smaller countries into aligning with China's interests in a new version of feudalism. Again, Cai advises that during her time of instructing CCP leaders, it was taught that the BRI was primarily a military project.¹⁷

A good example of this BRI debt trap is Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka, in the late 2000s, badly needed an economic stimulus. China provided a loan for the construction of a major port facility that was not needed but the economic inflow would be a boon for the country. The contract was signed and included a clause that the port would not be used for any military activities. Shortly after the contract was signed, Sri Lanka defaulted and the port lapsed to Chinese control for 99 years. After completion, the Chinese Navy started to use it as a port-of-call.¹⁸ This calculated move by China looks incredibly like the former terms of British control of Hong Kong, the very terms that China previously

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Nilanthi Samaranayake, "Chinese Belt and Road Investment Isn't All Bad or Good," Foreign Policy, March 04, 2021, accessed June 26, 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/03/02/sri-lanka-china-bri-investment-debt-trap/>

excoriated as imperialist, racist, and unlawful. Additionally, it likes very reminiscent of the tributary system with client states.

Looking at more modern methods of imperialism, the Chinese government rules the cyber realm. Whether it be hacking companies or insisting upon Internet censorship around the world, China is the world leader in creating new norms for a new frontier. Worldwide, companies are afraid to anger the CCP and choose to self-censor rather than speak freely. The Chinese government-linked a Marriott employee in America to “liking” a free Tibet tweet and pressured the company into firing the employee.¹⁹ But Chinese cyberstalking does not end at tweets and posts. Recently, Chinese influence campaigns have been revealed in Western countries to gain the support of academics, politicians, and the elite of society.

Due to a variety of reasons, Americans, and Westerners in general, suffer from deep mirror-imaging biases when conducting foreign relations. This mirror imaging causes problems when policymakers attempt to discern how China will act. Rather than look at the facts, policy makers like to go with their gut and what feels right. An example of this is when Presidents W. Bush and Obama made light of Russian actions, which only emboldened Russian President Putin.²⁰ If Western policy makers want to get China right, they need to consider China’s history and traditions, what it was and where it wants to

¹⁹ Wayne Ma, “Marriott Employee Roy Jones Hit ‘Like.’ Then China Got Mad,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 03, 2018, accessed June 26, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/marriott-employee-roy-jones-hit-like-then-china-got-mad-1520094910>

²⁰ Alex Beall, “How Obama, Bush, Clinton Viewed Russia's Putin over Time,” *USA Today*, March 26, 2014, accessed June 26, 2021, <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2014/03/26/obama-bush-clinton-putin/6880707/>

return, and of course look at objective reality and facts on the ground and not just China's flowery language and promises.

Objectively speaking, the CCP will not decide to become a liberal democracy or even loosen its control over its people or economy. History has shown that this is true with totalitarian regimes. To expect China to follow international norms that were set by the West is highly unlikely. Just because the West follows the rules is no reason to expect China to follow them, especially after 100 years of the CCP challenging those rules have proven otherwise. The rational expectation is that China will challenge, destabilize, and replace Western norms and values unless the West awakens to the situation that engagement and appeasement are not working.

Definitions and Methodology

The terms Chinese government, Chinese Communist Party (CCP), China, Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOE), and the Peoples Republic of China (PRC), Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOE), are all synonyms and should not be mistaken for either the Chinese people or the government of Taiwan or its people.

The CCP in this study is a totalitarian organization, bent on a one-party rule and controlling everything to include foreign companies operating in China and the Chinese National Security Law, which supposedly covers everyone and everywhere in the world.²¹

Confucius Institutes are partnerships between Chinese universities and counterparts in other countries to promote the Chinese language and culture. The funding for these institutes is provided by the Chinese government, which sets the rules of what and how the aforementioned topics are taught, or what is not taught. The Chinese government's role in the curriculum has raised various concerns, especially from proponents of academic freedom.²²

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a Chinese government worldwide infrastructure program started in earnest in 2013 and could be considered the main pillar of Chinese foreign policy so much so that it has been added to China's constitution.

²¹ Naomi Xu Elegant, "If You're Reading This, Beijing Says Its New Hong Kong Security Law Applies to You," *Fortune*, October 14, 2020, accessed July 08, 2021, <https://fortune.com/2020/07/07/hong-kong-law-scope-extraterritorial-jurisdiction/>.

²² Claude Zannardi, "China's Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics: The Cases of Confucius Institutes and Chinese Naval Diplomacy," *Journal of Political Power* 9, no. 3 (October 3, 2016): accessed March 25, 2021, doi:10.1080/2158379x.2016.1232289, p.446.

Approximately 140 countries have signed on to the BRI in hopes of receiving financing and aid in building roads, railroads, ports, dams, and other infrastructure projects.

Criticisms of the BRI usually revolve around loans with nearly impossible terms to impoverished nations that have no hope of paying them back and thus geographically strategic areas revert to Chinese control.²³

Made In China 2025, like the BRI, is a national industrial plan to develop China's manufacturing from low-tech to high-tech goods and becoming the world leader in technology, especially in the realm of semiconductors. The plan also calls for China to slowly move from importing raw materials from overseas, with a goal of 70 percent of critical components, like semiconductors, to be sourced domestically. Made In China 2025 drew criticism from foreign governments due to its initial blatant advertising that by 2025, China hoped to starve foreign competitors out of business.²⁴

The terms "the West" and "Western countries" are used interchangeably and are defined as:

Western civilization, Western world, Western society, is the heritage of social norms, ethical values, traditional customs, belief systems, political systems, artifacts and technologies of the Western world. The term also applies beyond Europe to countries and cultures whose histories are strongly connected to Western Europe by immigration, colonization, or influence. For example, Western culture includes determined countries in the Americas and Oceania.²⁵

²³ Cia Xia, "China-US Relations In The Eyes Of The Chinese Communist Party: An Insider's Perspective," Hoover Institution, June 29, 2021, accessed July 08, 2021, <https://www.hoover.org/research/china-us-relations-eyes-chinese-communist-party-insiders-perspective-zhong-gong-yan-zhong>.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Marvin Perry et al., *Western Civilization Since 1400*, 10th ed. (Boston, MA: Wadsworth Pub, 2012), 1.

This study uses case studies, forecasting, explanatory (historical evaluative), and argumentative methodologies.

Chapter 1: The F-Word in Political Science: Communist China's Fascist Underpinnings

“To know your Enemy, you must become your Enemy.”²⁶

Political scientists often describe communism and fascism as mutually exclusive “left” and “right” poles on the political spectrum. The extreme behavior of twentieth-century Axis powers also gives the term “fascism” a quality that encourages its use in political hyperbole but discourages its consideration as an objective assessment of any country’s political system. However, the CCP’s nationalist ideology (including domestic policy), irredentist claims in the South and East China Seas, and neo-colonialism in Africa and South America increasingly challenge this presumed polarity. The question is: “What if the CCP has evolved from communism to fascism?” In this chapter, Mussolini’s Italy is used as a fascist archetype and evaluates Chinese ideology and behavior against these criteria. An understanding of the CCP as fascist helps predict future PRC foreign policy behavior and evolution by analyzing the context and historical markers and modeling those for the probability of future results. This analysis will test beliefs that may not be correct. China-watchers, statesmen, and political scientists see the CCP in a new light if China is fascist becomes the new authoritative position.

In the case of human rights, economics, and geo-political relations semantics and normative behaviors matter. Extensive acceptance of the CCP as fascist would:

- undermine PRC “soft power” worldwide and diminish the appeal of the so-called “Beijing consensus;”

²⁶ Ibid.

- discredit China's comprehensive campaign to demonize Japan, the U.S., and Western society and norms;
- encourage PRC citizens to consider a critical reappraisal of the CCP's narrative of human rights and economics, and by extension, its legitimacy;
- encapsulate a concise explanation that clarifies PRC irredentism and its quest for hegemony for the casual observer;
- advance upon existing historical models used for understanding Chinese thinking and predicting future Chinese behavior;
- isolate China and stigmatize its non-normative behavior by prompting a stark "us and them" categorization, with the majority of the world as "us," and fascist China as "them."

Why Define the Chinese Communist Party?

Analysis of China stresses Chinese behavior within a limited framework and frequently overlooks fundamental societal and political influences causing these actions. For example, the CCP's expansionist campaign in the SCS and ECS is usually considered, by the CCP, as an effort to defend Chinese sovereignty claims against supposed infringements from neighboring countries. While the descriptive analysis may be useful in understanding China's view of events or portraying Chinese actions within a specific moment in time, this tactical analysis lacks direct links to political incentives underlying Chinese conduct.

Modern political scientists have had difficulty politically re-defining the CCP since the Party's post-Mao turn towards reactive nationalism. Labels range from

imprecise terms such as “authoritarian” to more unclear ones such as “market-Leninist.”

However, when compared against objective criteria, the CCP’s current ideology and actions in ongoing maritime disputes and economic ventures look like fascism more than any other political ideology.

Communism vs. Fascism

The amount of scholarly work done on defining communism and fascism is extensive and cannot be ignored. There is a new definition for every scholar and such is the way of political science in dealing with less than quantifiable subjects. And yet, several researchers have tried to quantify both ideologies or to put them in terms that may be easier to understand than abstract ideologies. There are differences in the manner and mode of communism and fascism and yet perhaps the similarities overcome the differences and most if not all totalitarian regimes are fundamentally the same despite the origin point.

Many scholars, especially in the 1970s era, expressly rejected the idea that the Chinese Government could be considered fascist. Elkins probably had the most compelling argument noting that there was an actual fascist government in China and it was not the Maoist revolution. Rather, he begins our analysis with reasoning by an in-depth exploration of the Chinese “Blue Shirts Society” and rejected the idea that Maoist Communism could be interpreted as fascist. The Blue Shirts Society of the 1930s was a covert Chinese bloc of the Kuomintang (KMT) that exhibited similar characteristics to Italian fascists. He explained that true fascism was a “double rejection of Marxist

socialism on the left and classical capitalism on the right.”²⁷ He continued that Chinese fascism in the form of the Blue Shirts paled in comparison with its European cousins because during the Blue Shirt period the Chinese nationalistic bourgeoisie did not have the needed social or economic power to gain domination over the left or right.²⁸

Notice that the KMT was compared against Italian Fascism and not national socialism which are distinct ideologies and yet equating national socialism to fascism is a common occurrence both during the previous studies of Chinese fascism and today and needs to be mentioned.²⁹ Both Sauer and Dulffer attempted to disabuse their readers of this fallacy while noting the historical underpinnings of communism and fascism.^{30,31} Sauer firmly establishes the link of national socialism with communism. According to Sauer, fascism may be described as the manipulation of providers while communism and national socialism are the manipulations of consumers.³² At first glance, this seems to be counterintuitive to the socialist belief of controlling the means of production but it fits the theory of the fascist PRC Government is more adroit at controlling state-owned

²⁷ Elkins, W. F. “Fascism in China: The Blue Shirts Society 1932-37.” *Science & Society* 33, no. 4 (1969): 426–33. www.jstor.org/stable/40401439.

²⁸ Ibid, 30.

²⁹ Chang, Maria Hsia. “Fascism and Modern China.” *The China Quarterly* 79 (1979): 553–67. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0305741000038315>.

³⁰ Dulffer, Jost. “Bonapartism, Fascism and National Socialism.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 11, no. 4 (1976): 109–28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002200947601100407>.

³¹ Sauer, Wolfgang. “National Socialism: Totalitarianism or Fascism?” *The American Historical Review* 73, no. 2 (1967): 404. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1866167>.

³² Ibid.

enterprises and “two-systems one country” than allowing the people to decide production. Not to be outdone, Dulffer argued that Karl Marx’s first forays into socialist thought were fascist ideology because it focused on controlling the industrial elite.³³ One further similarity between the two ideologies according to Dulffer is that mass terrorism is needed in both to overcome the “lack of enthusiasm” of the masses.³⁴ In any event, these two academics believed that although national socialism is not the same as fascism the line is thin between fascism and communism to the point that they might be the same and only our cognitive dissonance separates the “bad” fascist of World War II with the “good” or at least “acceptable” communists of today.

Further highlighting differences between communism and fascism by comparing the daily life of the average person under fascism and communism, Corner argued that life under a fascist regime has relatively little impact on day-to-day issues as opposed to that of someone under a communist regime, and introducing the idea that fascism is more business-focused and top-down versus communism’s purportedly grass roots, bottom-up society.³⁵ Lammers found much the same when he studied communism in the United Kingdom. He concluded that communism’s goal was to control the individual or bottom-up control while fascism’s end was control of the nation or top-down control.³⁶

³³ Dulffer, 109-28.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Corner, Paul. *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes Fascism, Nazism, Communism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.

³⁶ Lammers, Donald. “Fascism, Communism, and the Foreign Office, 1937-39.” *Journal of Contemporary History* 6, no. 3 (1971): 66–86.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/002200947100600305>.

Finally, in defense of fascism and communism being separate ideologies, much like Corner theorized, Furet found that fascism was capitalism taken to extremes. He discovered this while attempting to find a dialectical correlation between the two ideologies noting that they both have the same starting point of finding a “political deficit of modern democracy.” According to his findings, fascism is more of capitalism exacerbated democracies issues (which is close to the currently accepted definition) while socialism and communism are more original in that they were created to fill the voids of democracy’s shortcomings.³⁷ In other words, communism was a cure while fascism was a symptom of democracy’s shortcomings.

But are They Really Different?

To underscore this, communism and fascism share many core beliefs and founding ideas. According to Tismaneanu fascism and communism are opposites on the political spectrums and yet they share the same cultural, social, and political ideas.³⁸ Specifically, even though they start at different points the result is the same: a new world order by destroying the old and disposing of the bourgeoisie. Furthermore, Tismaneanu believed that both ideologies have the same fundamental logical flaws: “a lack of sensitivity to the psychological makeup of the mankind,” and “the needs of many for deep spiritual or cultural sources of meaning.”³⁹ In other words, people have an inherent

³⁷ Furet, Francois, and Ernst Nolte. *Fascism and Communism*. Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2004.

³⁸ Tismaneanu, Vladimir. *The Devil in History: Communism, Fascism, and Some Lessons of the Twentieth Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014.

³⁹ Ibid.

desire to be free and to make decisions for themselves. Therefore, according to Tismaneanu fascism and communism are inseparably connected.

The two ideologies are two sides of the same “political religion” bound together by the “sacralization of the language and rites” of violence against regime opponents, as posited by Ehret.⁴⁰ This takes the connection between fascism and communism a step further than “mere” social constructs. If to be a government means to have a monopoly on the use of force and violence, then a totalitarian government means to have a monopoly on even the hopes and dreams of people to where the individual means nothing compared to the survival of the regime;⁴¹ a monopolistic force deployed to maintain control and protect the regime throughout the world but not to protect the public.

Finally, both fascists and communists share many of the same psychological tendencies. Eysenck tried to isolate and disprove a psychological relationship between fascism and communism. To do this, he created an axis matrix of radical-conservatism as the X-axis and either tough-mindedness or tender-mindedness as the Y-axis. He expected to find fascists high on tough-mindedness and communists high on the tender-mindedness scales. However, he found they were about the same. These findings greatly

⁴⁰ Ehret, Ulrike. “Understanding the Popular Appeal of Fascism, National Socialism and Soviet Communism: The Revival of Totalitarianism Theory and Political Religion.” *History Compass* 5, no. 4 (2007): 1236–67. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2007.00438.x>.

⁴¹ Miller, Paul D. “Yes, Blame China for the Virus.” *Foreign Policy*. Foreign Policy, March 25, 2020. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/25/blame-china-and-xi-jinping-for-coronavirus-pandemic/>.

dismayed Eysenck as they disproved his theory;⁴² however, his findings lend credence that even on an emotional or psychological level, fascism and communism are closer than given credit for.

A Rose by Any Other Name

“What’s in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.”⁴³ This popular refrain from William Shakespeare’s play *Romeo and Juliet*, and means the significance of an object or person is the way it is or its actions and not because of what it is called. Perhaps it does not even matter if fascism and communism are the same ideology in reality or if they are completely separate. What matters more is actions and not words or aspiring philosophies. Now that we have looked at the differences and similarities between the two ideologies, it is plausible now to focus on the PRC Government and exactly where it is in terms of modern ideology.

The question of the PRC Government’s flirtations with fascism was last seriously considered in academic circles in the 1970s, where similarities were examined with the sometimes-fascist Kuomintang regime.⁴⁴ This comparison was natural because both governments were Chinese and one championed Leninist socialism, which shared some fascist similarities. However, Chang believed that scholar of the time did not fully

⁴² Eysenck, H. J. “The Psychology of Politics and the Personality: Similarities between Fascists and Communists.” *Psychological Bulletin* 53, no. 6 (1956): 431–38. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0043987>.

⁴³ Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. Edited by David Garrick. London: Cornmarket Press, 1969.

⁴⁴ Chang, 553–67.

understand or comprehend Chinese governments; those elements of Chinese fascism, specifically within both the Maoist Communist and Kuomintang Governments, was not a pure form of fascism and therefore cannot be labeled as fascism. Through Chang's comparison of Maoist China to Nazi Germany, she noted that the PRC Government was not fascist.⁴⁵ But in this comparison, Chang herself makes a mistake of labeling Nazi Germany as fascist when it was a form of socialism with many similarities to fascism.⁴⁶ Essentially, Chang is guilty of the same mislabeling that she accused her contemporaries of doing.

More recently, Evans-Pritchard also attempted to defend China while at the same backhandedly casting doubt on China's communist credentials by labeling China's "One Country, Two Systems" or "Communism with Chinese or Xi Jinping Characteristics" as "market Leninism."⁴⁷ Thus, inferring that China's economic behavior is a betrayal of true communism. In the end, Evans-Pritchard confesses that Chinese economics cannot be considered anything less than extreme capitalism.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Sauer.

⁴⁷ Evans-Pritchard, Ambrose. "China's Market Leninism Turns Dangerous for the World." The Telegraph. Telegraph Media Group, August 24, 2015. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/economics/11820817/Chinas-market-Leninism-turns-dangerous-for-the-world.html>.

Going a step beyond Evans-Pritchard, Tsou and Gregor argue that the PRC's fascist ways are more than just economic-based.⁴⁸⁴⁹⁵⁰ Indeed, like fascist thinkers, Chinese leaders from Sun Yat-sen to Mao Tse-tung to current PRC President Xi Jinping have all espoused patriotic education, rapid industrialization, information control, and revanchism to rejuvenate China and return the nation to its historic role as an Asian hegemon, not subordinate it to the stateless, class-based revolution of communism.⁵¹⁵² Gregor returned in additional work to use China as an example of neofascism and the rise of other fascist-like modern ideologies based on his pedagogical studies.⁵³

As more evidence of this, even in today's world, China rallies its people around jingoistic threats and half-truths. She points out that in 2013, China, to hide domestic issues, rallied its people to "fight a protracted war" against Japan.⁵⁴ A further example of antisocial behavior by China was the Chinese Government urging Chinese film producers

⁴⁸ Gregor, A. James. *A Place in the Sun: Marxism and Fascism in China's Long Revolution*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000.

⁴⁹ Tsou, Tang. *The Cultural Revolution and Post-Mao Reforms: a Historical Perspective*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

⁵⁰ Evans-Pritchard.

⁵¹ Gregor, A. James. *The Faces of Janus: Marxism and Fascism in the Twentieth Century*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000.

⁵² Tsou.

⁵³ Gregor, A. James. *The Search for Neofascism: The Use and Abuse of Social Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

⁵⁴ "Anti-Japanese Dramas to Flood Chinese TV Screens next Month." South China Morning Post, August 28, 2014.
<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1581474/anti-japanese-dramas-flood-chinese-tv-screens-next-month>.

to make an abundance of anti-Japanese films and TV shows.⁵⁵ This is hardly the neighborly behavior of an ideology that believes in the unity of men and class against the elite.⁵⁶

As noted previously, Chang was one of the PRC's staunchest apologists for reasons, as semantic as they were, that modern China was not a fascist country. However, later in her life she recanted those earlier arguments and pointed to the PRC actions, such as the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre as a turning point to extreme patriotic nationalism as a cornerstone of its ideology and legitimacy. This change in ideology has caused the PRC to fundamentally change Chinese myths, history, and heritages.⁵⁷

Building on the Tiananmen Square massacre, Clowes lists extensive examples of modern-day colonialism (neo-colonialism) expected more of a fascist government than a socialist one. In particular, he noted that China has lent \$126 billion to African countries with terms that seem very heavy-handed to the point of impossible to repay. Indeed, many are calling these terms what they are, economic imperialism. Some are even calling the terms and Chinese actions in the South China Sea racist.⁵⁸ Hutt points out that

⁵⁵ Sieg, Linda. "Japan on Backfoot in Global PR War with China after Abe Shrine Visit." Reuters. Thomson Reuters, February 12, 2014.
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-china-pr/japan-on-backfoot-in-global-pr-war-with-china-after-abe-shrine-visit-idUSBREA1B24520140212>.

⁵⁶ Al Jazeera. "Southeast Asia Wary on China, Belt and Road Initiative: Survey." News | Al Jazeera. Al Jazeera, January 7, 2019.
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/01/southeast-asia-wary-china-belt-road-initiative-survey-190107030233089.html>.

⁵⁷ Chang, Maria H. *Return of the Dragon: Chinas Wounded Nationalism*. Routledge, 2019.

⁵⁸ Clowes, Ed. "Inside the Murky World of China's Resource-Backed Loans." The Telegraph. Telegraph Media Group, February 29, 2020.

Chinese actions in the South China Sea are blows not only to the international order but to the very rule of law that governs the international space, sending a message that economic and military power means more than human rights and neighborly relations.⁵⁹

Unsurprisingly, the Chinese Government rarely shares news about their obliviousness and only works with other governments as it benefits them. As Paul Miller argued, Xi's "prime concern was not lives at risk, or containment of the virus, but rather the nation's and his reputation, place in the global supply chain and his grip on power."⁶⁰ By contrast, "democratic leaders are not afraid of information, and as a result, can judge the efficacy of their efforts, can fine-tune and adjust, and can respond to the flow of news in a way that optimizes lifesaving."⁶¹ Miller and others have accurately cataloged how Chinese leaders lied and tried to cover up the emergence of the coronavirus in December and January to save face.⁶²

With the COVID-19 pandemic, the issue is bigger and timelier than ever. The Chinese Government is not answerable to its civil society and therefore cares little about what happens in a day-to-day setting, a fascist hallmark as previously described by Corner above. Years ago, the U.S. and other Western nations did this in response to

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2020/02/29/inside-murky-world-chinas-resource-backed-loans/>.

⁵⁹ Hutt, David. "Why China Gets It Wrong in SE Asia." Asia Times, February 18, 2020. <https://asiatimes.com/2019/11/why-china-gets-it-wrong-in-se-asia/>.

⁶⁰ Miller, Paul D. "Yes, Blame China for the Virus." Foreign Policy. Foreign Policy, March 25, 2020. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/25/blame-china-and-xi-jinping-for-coronavirus-pandemic/>.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

public pressure. As Miller stated, “Chinese policymakers never have to face the voters, which is why, for example, there was little lasting reform or meaningful accountability after a scandal in 2008 in which tens of thousands of Chinese infants fell ill and required hospitalization after drinking contaminated milk.”⁶³

Why Ideology Matters

A China that is fascist instead of merely “authoritarian” or communist has significant consequences that transcend political semantics. As an antidemocratic and aggrieved country animated by revanchism and a zero-sum world view, China views itself as a humiliated victim denied national greatness by foreign hegemons. It reacts to economic downturns, perceived foreign threats, domestic unrest, and international law in ways fundamentally different from countries not animated by overriding nationalism.

Key implications include:

- Reliance on reactive nationalism as a pillar of legitimacy severely limits the Party’s “off-ramp” options in times of crisis, particularly when Beijing has manufactured the “lost territories” to be part of China’s inheritance as a “core interest.”
- The CCP narrative of foreign imperialism as the key enabler of Chinese humiliation places China’s collective psychology much closer to a “war mentality” than other countries and requires less justification for military action against foreign countries.

⁶³ Miller.

- In China's view, co-opting and destabilizing free markets and international political and economic norms are vital to the growth and reinforcement of one-party rule, not just another way of doing business or economics with Chinese characteristics.
- Strong anti-U.S. sentiment among China's ruling class is deeply rooted in a nationalistic, reactive political pathology that views the great power competition as zero-sum and the U.S. as the greatest threat to the PRC's economic expansion, military modernization, and "national rejuvenation" through the reclamation of so-called "historical" territories.
- Much like Beijing's perceived rivalry with the U.S., its deliberate cultivation of hatred of Japan exceeds neighborly rivalry or resentment from previous wars: it promotes a belief that the humiliation and destruction of Japan will redeem Chinese greatness and China's greatness is directly correlated with Japan's suffering.
- Academics cite powerful nationalist sentiment as a constraint on Beijing's ability to compromise. The same academics will characterize hardline stances against China as counterproductive because they undermine ostensible "Chinese moderate" voices - even as government-controlled and directed education, media, and entertainment develop and stoke Chinese nationalism.

Who You Calling a Fascist? A Case Study and Comparison of Mussolini's Italy and Modern China

The initial and still current default definition of fascist ideology was created in Italy by Giovanni Gentile and Benito Mussolini in 1915 through 1945. Nationalism in

many forms, including both cultural and radical nationalism and extreme unionism, were behind Italian Fascism as well as historical grievances of supposed Italian territorial claims; which Italians of the time considered important for Italy to demonstrate its modern bona fides and to overcome its decline. These fascists argued that as the legitimate successor to the Roman Empire and its history and territories, Italy, therefore, had a historical right of creating an Italian Empire in the image of Rome to colonize and to gain control over the Mediterranean region.⁶⁴

Much like Italian nationalism, modern Chinese nationalism focuses on blaming others and historical events for current injustices and internal problems. In 2013, when Xi Jinping became the Communist Party's General Secretary, Xi used the term "Chinese Dream" to define his ambitions for China. He coined "Chinese Dream" during a visit to China's National Museum in 2012 to witness an exhibition called "National Revival," which focused on historical grievances. "Chinese Dream" has since become the defining mantra of the Xi era.⁶⁵ The Chinese Dream and nationalism are also intertwined in the Chinese media.⁶⁶ In foreign affairs, the Chinese Dream and nationalism are closely connected to the Belt and Road Initiative. Peter Ferdinand suggests it is now becoming a

⁶⁴ Kallis, Aristotle A. *Fascist Ideology: Territory and Expansionism in Italy and Germany, 1922-1945*. New York: Routledge, 2000.

⁶⁵ "General Secretary Xi Jinping Explicates the 'Chinese Dream.'" *Chinese Law & Government* 48, no. 6 (February 2016): 477–79.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00094609.2016.1241116>.

⁶⁶ Hizi, Gil. "Speaking the China Dream: Self-Realization and Nationalism in China's Public-Speaking Shows." *Continuum* 33, no. 1 (2018): 37–50.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2018.1536967>.

vision for the PRC leadership in which China will “recover its rightful place.”⁶⁷ Chinese nationalism fights two main groups: Japan, which occupied China from 1931 to 1945, and separatism, such as independence movements from people in Tibet, Xinjiang Province, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Chinese provinces bordering Mongolia. Supposed advocates of self-determination and secession, such as the US and India, are also targeted.⁶⁸

Interestingly, Italian Fascism’s syndicalism looks much like and predated China’s communist syndicalism. Indeed, the CCP’s founding leader, Mao Zedong, promoted syndicalism years after Italy put its stamp on what was fascism. To stay true to Lenin’s belief that the communists needed to be seen at the forefront of politics, Mao led his revolution with its center taken from the proletariat. In this way, hyper-nationalism replaced class distinction with Mao. Italian Fascism did the same, depicted as a marginalized rural nation that had to “rise against the oppressing imperialist powers and their capitalist minions.”⁶⁹

Revolutionary nationalism is a political ideology that calls for a nation to be unified by a common sense of mission due to birthright, it is also known as revolutionary

⁶⁷ Ferdinand, Peter. “Westward Ho-the China Dream and ‘One Belt, One Road’: Chinese Foreign Policy under Xi Jinping.” *International Affairs* 92, no. 4 (2016): 941–57. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12660>.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Dagger, Richard, and Terence Ball. “Syndicalism.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., March 27, 2020. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/socialism/Syndicalism>.

nationalism or proletarian nationalism.⁷⁰ It was first attributed to radical syndicalism followers in the early 20th Century, and extensively espoused by Mussolini, which he noted as a philosophical juxtaposition of “radical nationalism and socialist dissident.”⁷¹ Like the beginnings of Italian revolutionary nationalism, Chinese nationalism is rooted in China’s deep historical legacy as the Middle Kingdom or the center of the world, wherein other known countries owed subservience or tribute to China. In the 19th century, this sense of dominance endured a sequence of devastating events, including massive-scale domestic uprisings, and, perhaps even more grievous, the systematic dominance of foreign nations due to the lack of advanced technology in China. These nations, led by the regional powers of the time, Britain, France, Japan, and Russia, repeatedly demonstrated their military supremacy culminating in the most dramatic embarrassment in 1900 known as the Boxer Rebellion in which eight foreign nations invaded and plundered China’s national capital. The desire for revenge and retribution for this national humiliation burns today and fired much of the Chinese Communist revolution.⁷²

Much like Fascist Italy, if there is one constant of the CCP’s policies it is its ever-growing territorial changes and claims. The accepted size of China’s territory has rarely been confirmed by Chinese officials, probably due to the frequent and continuing

⁷⁰ Griffin, Roger. “Mussolini Predicted a Fascist Century: How Wrong Was He?” *Fascism* 8, no. 1 (January 2019): 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1163/22116257-00801001>.

⁷¹ Herb, Guntram Henrik, and David H. Kaplan. *Nations and Nationalism. a Global Historical Overview*. Edited by Aristotle A. Kallis. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2008.

⁷² Wright, Mary Clabough. *China in Revolution: the First Phase, 1900-1913*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968.

changes in their territorial claims. Since the official beginning of the PRC on 1 October 1949, the PRC has made a steady stream of claims over both international and other country claimed territories and seas. Indeed, every decade the number of claims grows, which seems strange since often the PRC claims that these new claims have been part of China since “time immemorial.” It would seem that territory that had been part of a country since time immemorial would not need to be claimed. The PRC, which claimed it was a different country than the previous Republic of China, claimed five new territories between 1949 and 1959, two between 1960 and 1969, two between 1970 and 1979, one between 1980 and 1989, four between 1990 and 1999, four between 2000 and 2009, and two between 2010 and 2019. Most of these territorial gains came through violence and intimidation of neighboring nations, very much a trait of Italian Fascism.⁷³ The amount of territory claimed by China since 1949 has nearly doubled the size of what China was at the beginning of the CCP's reign.

Italian Fascism advocated a corporatist economic structure in which employers and employee collectives are connected in alliances to jointly reflect the economic creators of the country and work together with the government to develop an economic policy for the nation.⁷⁴ This economic structure proposed to overcome fighting between

⁷³ Fravel, M. Taylor. “Analysis | Mike Pompeo Criticized China for Not Respecting Its Neighbors’ Territorial Integrity. What’s the Story?” The Washington Post. WP Company, February 21, 2020. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/02/21/mike-pompeo-criticized-china-not-respecting-its-neighbors-territorial-integrity-whats-story/>.

⁷⁴ Whittam, John. *Fascist Italy*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005.

classes by inter-class cooperation.⁷⁵ Like Fascist Italy, the CCP only acknowledges itself as the undisputed leader of the sectoral interests of the people, companies, and organizations that make up the industry. The state decides which organizations will be accepted as official and establishes with those entities a top-down relationship. The organizations are to implement and enforce policies on behalf of the government.⁷⁶ As the adjudicator of authority and assigning responsibility to one single entity for a specific group, the state restricts the number of players it needs to discuss policies with and co-opts organizations' leaderships into regulating its workers.⁷⁷ This system is not limited to economic bodies such as business and social organizations but every face of society.⁷⁸

Mussolini, as an example of Italian Fascism and other fascist leaders, rejected liberalism, particularly classical liberalism, and condemned it as “the debacle of individualism”;⁷⁹ but rather than pursuing a “reactionary reconstruction” of the pre-French Revolution world, that was considered to be corrupted, it had “a forward-looking

⁷⁵ Powell, Jim. “The Economic Leadership Secrets of Benito Mussolini.” *Forbes*. *Forbes Magazine*, February 22, 2012. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jimpowell/2012/02/22/the-economic-leadership-secrets-of-benito-mussolini/#39dac29f68e6>.

⁷⁶ Unger, Jonathan, and Anita Chan. “China, Corporatism, and the East Asian Model.” *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 33 (1995): 29–53. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2950087>.

⁷⁷ Gilley, Bruce. “Paradigms of Chinese Politics: Kicking Society Back Out.” *Journal of Contemporary China* 20, no. 70 (2011): 517–33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2011.565181>.

⁷⁸ Hurst, William. “The City as the Focus.” *China Information* 20, no. 3 (2006): 457–79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203x06070035>.

⁷⁹ Weber, Eugen. *The Western Tradition: from the Renaissance to the Present*. D.C. Heath Company, 1990.

path”.⁸⁰ Because of the expected opposition of Marxist Socialism to nationalism,⁸¹ fascism was opposed to it but it was also contrasting the “reactionary conservatism” founded by Joseph de Maistre.⁸² Italian Fascism believed that the progress of Italian Nationalism, along with a commitment to a modern Italy, required the upholding of historical practices and a strong knowledge of a common and shared history among Italians.⁸³

Like Italy of the time, the CCP sought to assert its nationalist rather than communist legitimacy by the use of manipulated history through “aggressive and consensual nationalism.”⁸⁴ Chinese aggressive nationalism focuses on a painful “century of humiliation” and seeks to provoke widespread outrage against former colonial powers, particularly Japan and the United States. The goal was to make the Chinese remember that after 1949 the CCP rescued them and led a resurgence of national identity ever since. China’s consensual nationalism is more diplomatic, underlining growing cultural relations among modern Chinese. Through this, the CCP aims to be known as a party of reconciliation and reunification, thus giving itself a mandate of territorial expansion.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Pugliese, Stanislao G. *Fascism, Anti-Fascism, and the Resistance in Italy: 1919 to the Present*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004.

⁸¹ Payne, Stanley G. *A History of Fascism: 1914-45*. London: Routledge, 2001.

⁸² Lazzaro, Claudia, and Roger J. Crum. *Donatello among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*. Ithaca: (N.Y.), 2005.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Weatherley, Robert, and Qiang Zhang. *History and Nationalist Legitimacy in Contemporary China: a Double-Edged Sword*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2017.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

China has rewritten its history to follow both nationalisms, defying Western scholars and creating a national history that is more myth than fact.⁸⁶

Italian fascists were strongly unreceptive to national socialism as Italian Fascism did not support Nordicism⁸⁷ and did not immediately support the anti-Semitism inherent in Nazi ideology, although some fascists supported racist views and produced some racial policies at the beginning of Italy's fascist rule. Italian laws started to change drastically as Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany strengthened ties and Italy was openly antisemitic due to intense pressure from Nazi Germany. In addition, some linguistic and ethnic minorities in Italy were also persecuted while the fascists were in power.⁸⁸

While racism, like Italian racism, was not a founding concept of the CCP, numerous forms of racism made it into contemporary China, many of them by CCP officials when it suits their domestic and international political agenda to the point that it is supported by the state. Racism or racial discourses do not exist as an ideology for their own sake or by themselves but often represent relationships of power.⁸⁹ Today, China's racial thought can manifest in different narratives addressing the political and ideological requirements of CCP officials, intellectual elites, and ordinary citizens. Although the

⁸⁶ Crossley, Pamela Kyle. "Xi's China Is Steamrolling Its Own History." *Foreign Policy*, January 29, 2019. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/01/29/xis-china-is-steamrolling-its-own-history/>.

⁸⁷ An ideology of racial superiority that perceives the Nordic race as superior, and often as a racial category at risk.

⁸⁸ Jepson, Allan, and Alan Clarke. *Managing and Developing Communities, Festivals and Events*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

⁸⁹ Cheng, Yinghong. "Racism and Its Agents in China." *Discourses of Race and Rising China*, 2019, 239–94. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-05357-4_5.

most recent and telling example is the redirection of the rage of the Chinese public at COVID-19 toward Black Africans rather than the CCP, there are many others.⁹⁰⁹¹

No Happy Endings

The prominent role of fascist ideology in China's strategic trajectory has ominous implications for U.S. relations with China. China's territorial disputes or human rights abuses cannot be rationally or dispassionately discussed due to their intrinsic, almost metaphysical connection with Chinese articles of faith regarding the PRC's national rejuvenation and "return" to imagined great power status. Furthermore, China's sacred belief in its claim of "lost" territories leaves little in the way of escape routes for China's leaders should a conflict erupt over disputed sovereignty. While a Chinese military defeat in a Taiwan, SCS, or ECS confrontation could slow China's expansionist campaign, the CCP's fascist ideology would preclude a return to the status quo. The result would instead be a long-term standoff between China and its adversaries and an even more aggrieved and nationalistic China.

It would seem that China suppressed its revanchist tendencies during its formative years because the CCP lacked the means to act on them and did not want to be measured

⁹⁰ Sun, Yun. "COVID-19, Africans' Hardships in China, and the Future of Africa-China Relations." Brookings. Brookings, April 17, 2020.
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/africa-in-focus/2020/04/17/covid-19-africans-hardships-in-china-and-the-future-of-africa-china-relations/>.

⁹¹ A more comprehensive, if not authoritative, list of what appears to be Chinese state-sponsored or at least state-approved racism related to COVID-19 may be found here: "List of Incidents of Xenophobia and Racism Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, May 4, 2020.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_incidents_of_xenophobia_and_racism_related_to_the_COVID-19_pandemic#China.

by them. This runs counter to the prevailing thought that China has had a measured and patient approach to international relations. However, recently, China's national power has grown and the world has sought ways of accommodating its rise. The CCP's successes in exploiting these opportunities have stoked confidence in its revanchist model, reflected in a reinforced CCP narrative of "lost" territories and foreign hegemons. If Beijing once again perceives the costs of expansionism to outweigh the benefits, (i.e., if accommodation and opportunity disappear), the CCP might resume suppression of its irredentist actions and supporting narratives. But placating China's current demands is more likely to whet China's appetite, not sate it.

Conclusion

In the 1970s many academics attempted to discern between fascism and socialism, with some attempting to find correlations with the Chinese Government of the time. With few outliers, most agreed that the two ideologies had distinctive origins but the end states are not dissimilar enough not to be at least discussed as the same. Furthermore, more current scholarly looks at China's actions, as opposed to its words, have clearly shown a more fascist-like emphasis on economic control over not only its people but of its neighbors and other countries, as well as other disturbing fascist trends like racism and cultural superiority. Modern China may have started with the goal of being a worker's paradise with working-class ideals but that dream has died as the PRC Government

makes more and more moves not to protect the people, but the Party. Indeed, Xi himself instructed the PRC military that their duty was to the Party and not the people.⁹²

Despite the evidence of fascist China, the same scholars who identified the similarities between fascism and communism and China's embrace of fascist tactics all fall short of labeling China as fascist. Even U.S. officials seem unwilling to make the connection. Hoffman, a former high-level intelligence official, described China's initial reaction to the Corona Virus in terms of the Soviet Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster, with accompanying fascist top-down controls.⁹³ This could be for multiple reasons, mostly revolving around Chinese economic tactics in countries around the world and other bullying efforts of academics that one would expect to see from a fascist regime. Alternatively, the answer could be far simpler – that no one has connected the dots in a manner that would be difficult to refute, such as a case study of fascist Italy and modern China. In any event, it is clear that further study is needed to solidify the claim that China is now a fascist country in name and deed and that perhaps there is no such thing as a communist regime, in fact, rather communism has either not been established correctly or, in reality, communism is a quasi-fascist political ideologue.

Many of these results are worrying; however, fascism is an accurate descriptor of China's political conduct. The features and implications of fascism are widely

⁹² Griffiths, James. "Xi Says Military Must Obey Communist Party as Leadership Reshuffle Nears." CNN. Cable News Network, August 25, 2017.
<https://www.cnn.com/2017/08/01/asia/xi-jinping-military/index.html>.

⁹³ Hoffman, Daniel N. "Xi's Chernobyl Exposes China's Fatal Vulnerabilities." The Washington Times. The Washington Times, March 12, 2020.
<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2020/mar/12/xi-jinpings-coronavirus-chernobyl-exposes-chinas-f/>.

understood, and precise language will support precise understanding. Reluctance to articulate China's aggressiveness has not moderated Chinese attitudes or behavior. On the contrary, rejection of a "fascist" label for China burnishes the CCP's "anti-fascist" and "anti-colonialization" narrative and emboldens the Party's expansionist campaign.

Chapter 2: No Place to Hide: Foreign Influence and Propaganda in the Rural United States

“Engage people with what they expect; it is what they are able to discern and confirms their projections. It settles them into predictable patterns of response, occupying their minds while you wait for the extraordinary moment — that which they cannot anticipate.”⁹⁴

In February 2016, Chinese President Xi Jinping was widely quoted as saying “Wherever the readers are, wherever the viewers are, that is where propaganda reports must extend their tentacles.”⁹⁵ There is no shortage of information and explanations of official Chinese government media expansion throughout the world and increasingly in the United States. Indeed, the official Chinese government newspaper of record *China Daily*’s filing under the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) reveals a yearly average of \$10 million in advertising spending in U.S. newspapers since 2011.⁹⁶ It would be expected that most of this spending, and therefore the majority of the intended impact, is to land upon readers of America’s most prominent newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. To see 100 percent of the *China Daily* budget used in such media outlets would not be a surprise. And yet Chinese U.S.-targeted media is showing up in smaller, more locally-focused news media. Why would China

⁹⁴ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Goodreads, accessed July 05, 2021, https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/1771.Sun_Tzu.

⁹⁵ Sarah Cook, “Beijing’s Global Megaphone,” Freedom House, January 11, 2020, accessed March 17, 2021, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2020/beijings-global-megaphone>.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

throw advertising money at rural towns in Iowa rather than metropolitan areas? Does Chinese foreign advertising in rural U.S. areas affect policy at the federal level in favor of China? Does the Chinese government believe it but has the strategy backfired in recent times? This chapter will examine China's rural advertising in the United States to determine if there is a correlation between said advertising and federal policies that could be considered beneficial to Chinese interests. Additionally, this chapter will also demonstrate that China's investment in local newspaper advertising suggests another example of China continuing in its neo-imperial and neo-colonial ways.

The primary portion of this chapter will focus on China's advertising and marketing campaign to disrupt communications on the Internet and social media to control public perception in the US. This involves reviewing the published literature regarding Chinese manipulation of media worldwide, in Western countries, and finally in the United States. The focus will then shift to how China employs disruptive campaign tactics to a rural newspaper in Iowa. This study demonstrates what China is doing is disruptive and perilous insofar as it uses American's democratic establishments and free speech to undermine the foundations of democracy.

It is well known that every country uses some kind of foreign influence with both its friends and enemies. Whether that be through foreign aid or other soft-power means or hard-power, the goal is the same: influence a foreign country to better suit the needs and desires of the giving country. The only difference with China is that they play the game so much better than any other country. This is due to China having the resources, the lack of domestic accountability, and the seemingly immense hubris that allows China not to recognize its hypocrisy in regards to foreign interference.

Many researchers have studied Chinese foreign influence campaigns. Most of which have focused on the macro, worldwide, and national-level campaigns. Indeed, it was difficult to choose which of the macro-level studies to include in this study. But few have dug deeper into the micro-level influence campaigns, probably because of the lack of initial interest. There were some, and some were mentioned in passing in the larger studies but overall, it was difficult to find evidence of Chinese influence at the rural, American level and how that affects policy at the federal level.

Influence via Foreign Direct Investments

Shiro Armstrong writes that to understand the scope and scale of Chinese government propaganda efforts throughout the world and its implications, it is important to note that Chinese official foreign direct investments (FDI), including media investments, are what they sound like: “investments.” But not traditional investments in the foreign location, though they do that as well, rather they are expected to reap dividends for China even at the expense of the country nominally receiving the FDI.⁹⁷ If China is not receiving monetary rewards for their investments, and yet the PRC is not complaining, they must be happy with the returns they are getting in the form of access and influence.

Picking up on this weakness and a prime opportunity to influence, Collison, Brennan, and Rios-Morales acknowledge that China has made a specialty at funneling FDI into small, developed economies.⁹⁸ Although these authors use a case study from

⁹⁷ Shiro Armstrong, “Assessing the Scale and Potential of Chinese Investment Overseas: An Econometric Approach,” *China & World Economy* 19, no. 4 (August 2, 2011), accessed February 26, 2021, doi:10.1111/j.1749-124x.2011.01248.x, p.22-37.

⁹⁸ Phoebe Collison, Louis Brennan, and Ruth Rios-Morales, “Attracting Chinese Foreign Direct Investment to Small, Developed Economies: The Case of Ireland,”

Ireland, there are many parallels with micro-level economics in the United States. The largest of which is that Chinese FDI to these communities often is a net negative for the investor, which of course, means there is a reason other than monetary returns on investments.

Disruptive Communications

Lance and Livingston narrow down foreign interference, though not specifically from China, to interference in the media, via “disruptive communications,”⁹⁹ and their negative effects on democratic institutions. The two monitored the advertisements around the Brexit debate and the election of Donald Trump. They seemed genuinely surprised at the ease at which foreign influence was picked up and echoed by mainstream media organizations in both the United States and the UK, using democratic institutions against themselves.¹⁰⁰ In the wake of Brexit and Trump’s election, disruptive communications have become the norm in both foreign and domestic-originated interference campaigns.

Digging deeper into the use of disruptive communications and the media, Golan and Carroll studied the power of the opinion piece (op-ed) in newspapers of record worldwide. Their studies revealed that most op-ed consumers do not fully understand that op-eds are not vetted opinions, for the most part. The majority of op-ed readers believe that the publishing newspapers do some type of due diligence on the pieces, despite many

Thunderbird International Business Review 59, no. 3 (March 06, 2017): accessed March 19, 2021, doi:10.1002/tie.21894, p.401-19.

⁹⁹ W. Lance Bennett and Steven Livingston, “The Disinformation Order: Disruptive Communication and the Decline of Democratic Institutions,” *European Journal of Communication* 33, no. 2 (2018): accessed February 26, 2021, doi:10.1177/0267323118760317, p.122.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 25.

newspapers making it clear that they do not.¹⁰¹ This is a disturbing trend of confirmation bias. The prevalence and ease of propaganda to make it into major newspapers combined with the aforementioned misunderstanding of readers create an easy avenue for China to reach thousands or even millions with its foreign influence.

Transitioning to how, specifically, China attempts to influence Americans and ultimately U.S. policy, Golan goes beyond his study of the power of the op-ed and turns his focus on Chinese influence in American newspapers. Golan and Lukito found that China seems to have a habit of using major American newspapers to attempt to reach U.S. policy makers and sway them against interfering in Chinese policies and practices by framing China as an international power, an equal to the United States, and therefore legitimate in their use of their power. However, the authors note, China itself is not as restrained in trying to insert its policy preferences in internal U.S. policy debates via the op-ed.¹⁰²

American's trust in the news media is not a new development and neither is its trust in China because of the news. In 1970, Yuan studied the effects of American audiences' perception of China through the American media and discovered that it was working remarkably well in China's favor. The majority of responders to Yuan's survey had positive things to say about China or noted that China was not a threat nor would it

¹⁰¹ Guy J. Golan and Terrance R. Carroll, "The Op-ed as a Strategic Tool of Public Diplomacy: Framing of the 2011 Egyptian Revolution," *Public Relations Review* 38, no. 4 (2012): accessed March 19, 2021, doi:10.1016/j.pubrev.2012.06.005, p.630-32.

¹⁰² Guy J. Golan and Josephine Lukito, "The Rise of the Dragon? Framing China's Global Leadership in Elite American Newspapers," *International Communication Gazette* 77, no. 8 (October 05, 2015): accessed March 20, 2021, doi:10.1177/1748048515601576, p.754-75.

become one because it was a poor, developing country. When asked why the responders believed such things, the most common answer was that was what was being reported in the news media.¹⁰³ It should be stressed that this is dated information and what was true 50 years ago may not be true any longer. We will see later that this has changed dramatically.

Moving from the global view of Chinese and other foreign influence campaign factors to that of those campaigns aimed at solely the United States as a whole, Benkler, Faris, and Roberts believe that foreign actors, not just China, are actively using social media to destroy the American Creed. The authors studied possible foreign influence between early 2015 and the first 12 months of the Trump presidency and discovered that institutional, political, and cultural changes in American politics combined with technological changes created a perfect storm of foreign influence. Much of which was adopted and amplified by American media.¹⁰⁴

Soft Power and “Wolf Warrior Diplomacy” as Disruptive Communications

Diamond and Schell introduce us to the Chinese concept of “Wolf Warrior Diplomacy,” fighting a war through soft power, and how it has already infiltrated the U.S. government, schools, think tanks, and media at every level. They remind their readers that China has not been shy about publicly declaring that the U.S. and China are

¹⁰³ Yacong Yuan, “Soft Power of International News Media: American Audiences’ Perceptions of China’s Country Image Mediated by Trust in News,” Digital Repository at the University of Maryland, January 01, 1970, [accessed March 24, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.13016/M2VQ2SB1W>].

¹⁰⁴ Yochai Benkler, Rob Faris, and Harold Roberts, *Network Propaganda Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), p.75-104.

at war and that the U.S. refuses to believe it as China goes about sowing division amongst Americans of all stripes.¹⁰⁵

Edney continues this line of thought that Chinese authorities over the past decade have been brazen and public about China's growing influence in America through media propaganda: specifically, how China uses America's institutions, politics, and ideals against themselves. One current and relevant example used by Edney is China's desire for the United States to sign binding climate agreements while China joins as a signatory only or making "joint-international" commitments that do not call for China-specific domestic commitments or that put off for years or decades Chinese commitments, thus putting all the burdens, including that of China, on countries like America but leaving China to do as it pleases.¹⁰⁶

Cutting to the heart of the issue of Chinese propaganda, Min and Luwei compared the effects of Chinese propaganda on the United States and South Korea. They discovered that the credibility of the delivering medium plays a huge role in how the message is received in the two countries. For example, advertising in mainstream media and newspapers of the record is received much easier than in smaller news outlets.¹⁰⁷ It

¹⁰⁵ Larry Jay Diamond and Orville Schell, *China's Influence & American Interests: Promoting Constructive Vigilance: Report of the Working Group on Chinese Influence Activities in the United States* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2019), p.7.

¹⁰⁶ Kingsley Edney, "Soft Power and the Chinese Propaganda System," *Journal of Contemporary China* 21, no. 78 (July 20, 2012): accessed March 19, 2021, doi:10.1080/10670564.2012.701031, p.899-914.

¹⁰⁷ Bumgi Min and Luwei Rose Luqiu, "How Propaganda Techniques Leverage Their Advantages: A Cross-national Study of the Effects of Chinese International Propaganda on the U.S. and South Korean Audiences," *Political Communication*, May 23, 2020, accessed March 22, 2021, doi:10.1080/10584609.2020.1763524, p.1-21.

would seem, at least in these two countries, that the credibility of the media matters, possibly signaling that consumers do not do enough of their due diligence.

It is not only old media that China uses its tactics to spread influence. In an attempt to explain the new world we live in, Hartnett discusses the 2010 case of China being caught stealing Google's browser code, hacking the accounts of human rights activists in the United States, and planting viruses on those accounts and yet coming out looking like the victim and the champion of the oppressed after being bullied by the United States. He describes a cyber world that has been framed by China and in which incompetent and indelicate U.S. officials have been soundly defeated.¹⁰⁸ It is a tale of how much power those countries that understand the new cyber-world order can wield compared to those countries that do not – it is not about who did what, rather who can frame the online conversation. Anyone who has watched members of the U.S. Congress ask questions of tech leaders knows the U.S. is way behind in this regard.¹⁰⁹

Segal has a slightly different take on Chinese cyber espionage and foreign influence campaigns than the other authors that covered the same topic. Instead of influence for one-off purposes like censoring operations, Segal argues Xi is concerned about the following specific events: domestic stability and CCP legitimacy, global PRC

¹⁰⁸ Stephen John Hartnett, "Google and the "Twisted Cyber Spy" Affair: US–Chinese Communication in an Age of Globalization," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 97, no. 4 (October 6, 2011): accessed March 20, 2021, doi:10.1080/00335630.2011.608705, p.411-34.

¹⁰⁹ USHRJC "Online Platforms and Market Power, Part 6: Examining the Dominance of Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google," Online Platforms and Market Power, Part 6: Examining the Dominance of Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google | U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee, July 29, 2020, accessed May 30, 2021, <https://judiciary.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=3113>.

military power, and overtaking the United States as the primary world power. According to Segal, Xi sees all three are interconnected and that the CCP cannot survive as long as the United States is the primary power and therefore the CCP has no other option than to try and sway U.S. public opinion to China's favor as a way to weaken the United States.¹¹⁰

The New Trojan Horse: Confucius Institutes

Building on Segal's argument of targeted Chinese influence campaigns against the U.S. public, Wang considered PRC leaders' overseas visits, Chinese media growth in remote locations, Confucius Institutes, global sporting events, and student scholarship programs as methods to promote and build pro-China public opinion in the United States. Like others before him, Wang theorized that China was seeing some kind of a return on its investment for those activities even if those events were money-losing operations.¹¹¹

Zanardi also highlights China's use of Confucius Institutes as soft-power tools to sell the Chinese public image throughout the world.¹¹² He found that the Institutes have one overarching theme "serve China's political goals as they serve to benefit China's worldwide reputation as a new power."¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Adam Segal, "A Hoover Institution Essay: Chinese Cyber Diplomacy," Hoover.org, June 2, 2017, accessed March 22, 2021, https://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/segal_chinese_cyber_diplomacy.pdf.

¹¹¹ Xiuli Wang, *Winning American Hearts and Minds: Chinas Image Building Efforts in the 21st Century* (Singapore: Springer, 2020), p.139-47.

¹¹³ Claude Zanardi, "China's Soft Power with Chinese Characteristics: The Cases of Confucius Institutes and Chinese Naval Diplomacy," *Journal of Political Power* 9, no.

Much like the Confucius Institutes, the Chinese government uses its United Front Work Department, commonly referred to as the United Front, to rewrite the West's narratives, perceptions, and rules to its benefit. Author Yoshihara describes the United Front as working to spread Beijing's propaganda, intimidate and censor people in foreign countries, and shape discussions revolving around the CCP and groups critical of Beijing's policies. He cites many of the CCP's writings to back up his claims of the PRC's political war and influence operations.¹¹⁴

Zhang and Cameron conclude the mountain of studies and evidence of Chinese public relations campaigns in the United States to polish its image and pursue its foreign affairs goals. Specifically, the authors call out the *New York Times* as being overly beneficial and an effective mouthpiece for China despite being kicked out of China, compared to other U.S. newspapers. Furthermore, they, like other aforementioned authors, discovered that China specifically targets professors of international relations and family members of U.S. officials with trips to China and other non-monetary rewards. Again, China focuses its efforts on those who are either previously ambivalent or friendly to Chinese persuasions.¹¹⁵ China is past trying to convince its critics.

From Virtual Reality to Reality

3 (October 3, 2016): accessed March 25, 2021, doi:10.1080/2158379x.2016.1232289, p.446.

¹¹⁴ Toshi Yoshihara, "Evaluating the Logic and Methods of China's United Front Work," *Orbis* 64, no. 2 (April 6, 2020): accessed March 24, 2021, doi:10.1016/j.orbis.2020.02.006, p.230-48.

¹¹⁵ Juyan Zhang and Glen T. Cameron, "China's Agenda Building and Image Polishing in the US: Assessing an International Public Relations Campaign," *Public Relations Review* 29, no. 1 (March 2003): accessed March 25, 2021, doi:10.1016/s0363-8111(02)00198-4, p.13-28.

Moving from the reality of institutions to virtual reality and building on China's ability to frame media conversations in the online world, Huang and Wang clarify that the West does not understand China's commitment to rule the online world. Specifically, how China has quietly been nudging technology companies to "tell China stories well" by slowly imposing China's own rules into the company's own rules. According to the authors, in a speech in 2013 Chinese President Xi introduced the concept of "tell China stories well" and indicated that China needed to be the "power behind the throne," of sorts, of Twitter. China then unleashed an army on Twitter, both to post and burnish the image of China but also to troll and constantly report what would be considered reasonable posts critical of China.¹¹⁶

Continuing the theme of Internet media manipulation by the CCP, King, Pan, and Roberts accuse China of the largest mass media disinformation campaign ever created. The authors point to the well-known and acknowledged "50 Cent Army," millions of Chinese government-hired activists to troll the internet posting disinformation to influence political debates in favor of China. According to their research, this "army" is responsible for 448 million fake social media posts every year. Interestingly, they also claim that the most effective method for disinformation is to stay clear of China's critics and only engage those who are not yet decided. Therefore, they are avoiding open and honest debate with those that might be better versed in countering Chinese propaganda.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Zhao Alexandre Huang and Rui Wang. "Building a Network to "Tell China Stories Well": Chinese Diplomatic Communication Strategies on Twitter." *International Journal of Communication*. June 2019. Accessed February 26, 2021. <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/11221>.

¹¹⁷ Gary King, Jennifer Pan, and Margaret E. Roberts, "How the Chinese Government Fabricates Social Media Posts for Strategic Distraction, Not Engaged

Much like the way China attempts to dominate the message on Twitter through pure numbers, Kalathil warns that China is attempting to do the same throughout the entire internet: “Using a mixture of marketplace-oriented mechanisms, propaganda, monetary strategies, and worldwide events, China is attempting to harness and control the global information environment. It has focused on three main avenues: shaping global media, guiding the evolution of the Internet, and influencing worldwide perceptions through Hollywood.”¹¹⁸ China’s multifaceted attempt reflects a contemporary, nuanced understanding of the new power in this nadir time of A.I. and technology.

Speaking of Chinese understanding of the new A.I. technologies, Wang, Lee, Wu, and Shen studied what type of posts that China and China-linked posters produced and noticed a high percentage of images used in their posts. When they dug deeper, they discovered these posters were probably using images to subvert social media companies’ A.I. that was looking for posts that went against their terms of use. Additionally, it was observed that English posts were flagged more often than Chinese language posts that conveyed the same message.¹¹⁹ Again, another example of using rules and policies against the creator of the rules.

Argument,” *American Political Science Review* 111, no. 3 (July 27, 2017): accessed March 21, 2021, doi:10.1017/s0003055417000144, p.484-501.

¹¹⁸ Shanthi Kalathil, “Beyond the Great Firewall: How China Became a Global Information Power,” Center for International Media Assistance, March 7, 2017, accessed March 21, 2021, <https://www.cima.ned.org/publication/beyond-great-firewall-china-became-global-information-power>.

¹¹⁹ Austin Horng-En Wang et al., “Influencing Overseas Chinese by Tweets: Text-Images as the Key Tactic of Chinese Propaganda,” *Journal of Computational Social Science* 3, no. 2 (November 11, 2020): accessed March 23, 2021, doi:10.1007/s42001-020-00091-8, p.469-86.

We Have Met the Enemy and They are Us: Western Pop Culture and China

Unlike democratic and capitalist countries where pop culture is an organic thing, according to Mengying, the CCP tries to manufacture Chinese pop culture and spread it throughout the world. Although the authors mentioned many examples of this from producing Hollywood films and jamming them full of positive China references and laying claim to all pandas in the world, Mengying focuses on the translation of the Chinese language into other languages. Specifically, China wants to be known as the authoritative translator of the Mandarin language. The author believes this way China can control the narrative of both what comes in and out of the country,¹²⁰ including different versions of the same document depending on the audience.

One example of the CCP using language as a method to control the masses while spinning its narrative is controlling the translations of Bibles allowed in China, including the Bibles of foreigners. In the *Bible*, there is a famous story in which Jesus forgives a woman taken in adultery. Jesus' point was that everyone, but him, is a sinner and if he can forgive someone, we all can exercise compassion and mercy because of their sins and despite what the law may state. In the Chinese government official translation of the story, Jesus stones the woman to death, claiming that despite his sins the law must be followed.¹²¹ No one is perfect therefore you should look to the CCP and its laws as the ultimate arbitrator of justice, and, of course, Jesus is not perfect nor a god.

¹²⁰ Mengying Jiang, "Translation as Cultural Diplomacy: A Chinese Perspective," *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, February 10, 2021, accessed March 21, 2021, doi:10.1080/10286632.2021.1872554, p.1-13.

¹²¹ Jessica Lea, "Chinese Textbook Rewrites Bible Story to Make Jesus Sinful," *ChurchLeaders*, October 26, 2020, accessed March 21, 2021,

Growing Astroturf: Disinformation and Social Media Campaigns

Moreover, continuing the research of China's social media army and perhaps societies' resistance to it, Zhao and DeDeo studied China's use of A.I. and "bots" to create the imitation of grass-roots consensus on social media and found some degree of hope against Internet-based foreign influence. The authors label this fake agreement building "Astroturf."¹²² They noted in their studies that China has increasingly been exporting its A.I. and bots out of the Great Firewall and onto the Internet to control the dialogue about China.¹²³ However, the Chinese use of bots has yet been to the point that it is so prevalent that it has caused concern. According to the authors, most social media sites believe they are an annoyance to either be ignored or just a cost of business when dealing with China, even though they found over "18,000 Chinese Astroturf accounts" and it was likely that 94 percent of all China-based social media accounts operating outside of China were bots.¹²⁴ These bot accounts were found to mainly focus on censoring or influencing discussions about topics that were also censored inside the Great Firewall.¹²⁵ In other words, China was attempting to surreptitiously create a normative worldwide Great Firewall without the technological Great Firewall. Yet, according to

<https://churchleaders.com/news/384480-chinese-textbook-woman-caught-in-adultery.html>.

¹²² Andy Zhao and Simon Dedeo, "Chinese Astroturf beyond the Great Firewall and Ineffective Computational Propaganda," *SocArXiv*, June 16, 2020, accessed April 13, 2021, doi:10.31235/osf.io/6p53v, p. 3.

¹²³ Ibid., 16.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 14.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 8.

Zhao and DeDeo, despite the great resources China puts into this program, it is “remarkably ineffective” as these bots, as sophisticated as they are, have yet to figure out how to reach a wide audience.¹²⁶ Perhaps users either do not go to their favorite social media applications for geopolitical news or they just ignore what they do see.

What Does It All Mean?

Tian, Xie, Wang, and Wang argue that China is the victim of Western trade and economic aggression and Chinese appeals in Western media is an effort to level the playing field through the only means it has.¹²⁷ This seems like a stretch as foreign media is already highly regulated within China. There is a difference between regulating what is shared in your own country and attempting to influence another country in their country. Additionally, according to the authors, the forced technology transfer of Western companies operating in China is not a problem because Western countries could do the same to Chinese companies operating in those countries if they wanted to. The authors believe that it is not China’s fault Western countries do not do this.¹²⁸

Despite Tian, Xie, Wang, and Wang’s argument, the majority of research that has been done to this point points to a clear conclusion that China takes advantage of Western norms and institutions to spread its influence. As was noted above, influence methods like FDI and pop culture are hardly Chinese innovations and are not always intended to

¹²⁶ Ibid., 13-4.

¹²⁷ Xiangyu Tian et al., “Why Chinese Exports Face So Many Trade Remedy Actions: An Empirical Study Based on Multi-country and Multi-industry Data,” *China & World Economy* 24, no. 6 (November 15, 2016): accessed March 23, 2021, doi:10.1111/cwe.12183, p.108-26.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

influence though they do. The same goes for more modern media outlets and platforms. And this is the brilliance of Chinese social engineering – taking what was created to entertain, improve, and connect people and turn it into a method of influencing country-level policies. Researchers have studied how China has methodically used DFI, disruptive communications in major media, using soft power to infiltrate U.S. education systems via Confucius Institutes and United Front dealings, and finally turning social media platforms into the ultimate of fake news.

China is actively engaged in ubiquitous campaigns to spread its influence throughout the U.S. media. However, the United States has not been completely negligent about Chinese propaganda through FDI and media manipulation. According to Kirkegaard, Chinese investments in the United States reached a peak in 2016. The decline in investments since 2016 is due, in part, to increased scrutiny into Chinese investments, media deals, and SOE operating in America. It also has to do with a finite supply of investment money and what seems to be the Chinese growing interest in investments in Europe post-2016, where lax investment laws and regulations are allowing China to gain incredible influence there. However, the author finds that Europe too is starting to clamp down on Chinese foreign influence through investment.¹²⁹

Despite the efforts of Chinese influence in the United States, the tide may be turning. Younis cites March 2021 polling from the Gallup Corporation that 45 percent of Americans now call China the number one enemy of the United States. This is up double

¹²⁹ Jacob Funk Kirkegaard, “Chinese Investment in the US and the EU Is Declining –for Similar Reasons,” *China & World Economy* 28, no. 2 (March 29, 2020): accessed March 22, 2021, doi:10.1111/cwe.12321, p.59-83.

from 2020 with most responders citing the COVID-19 pandemic, economic issues, and perceived Chinese human rights abuses.¹³⁰

China's methods of foreign influence are so well documented and yet it continues unabated. Most of the aforementioned studies and research above make it clear that China is very adept at using open society's media, both traditional and social media, against it; finding loopholes in regulation and flattering with the almighty dollar to bribe media companies into going against their long-term interests. Cook's Freedom House report accuses that in a world of unfettered capitalism, shrinking media budgets, and the exponential growth of media alternatives, media outlets will not restrict themselves when offered money – no matter the source.¹³¹ It should be noted that U.S. media corporations are good at reporting FARA incidents; however, it is unclear how in-depth U.S. media vetted money and advertisement dollars that come from SOE.¹³²

What is Next?

Although most of the research into this concerning phenomenon is centered around global and U.S.-focused major newspapers and social media applications, there were some mentions of smaller, more rural media outlets in the United States that have been equally affected by Chinese money. Why would this be? Why would a country with seemingly endless amounts of influence money spend it on rural America, what is the ultimate return on investment? It was noted earlier that China has, in the last decade or

¹³⁰ Mohamed Younis, "New High in Perceptions of China as U.S.'s Greatest Enemy," Gallup.com, March 11, 2021, accessed March 24, 2021, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/337457/new-high-perceptions-china-greatest-enemy.aspx>.

¹³¹ Sarah Cook, "Beijing's Global Megaphone."

¹³² Ibid.

so, changed whom it targets, those that are either already pro-China or those that are undecided about China. Who better fits that description than those American blue-collar workers who do not have a lot of discretionary time to look into the intricacies of the manipulative nature of Chinese advertisements in their hometown newspapers; yet have a penchant for speaking out to their elective representatives because they have not yet become jaded like their big city contemporaries? In the eyes of the PRC, middle America probably seems like a bargain on its return on investment of media dollars.

While China has been attacking at every angle of American media, it has also found a niche market that has been neglected and ripe for manipulation. It has been no secret that American rural communities have been hurting economically due to brain drain and capital flight from small-town America to America's big cities. According to Bailey, Jensen, and Ransom, this void has left an opening for foreign influence, one of which China seems happy to fill, at least in part.¹³³

We now turn to investigate this phenomenon. Why China would spend time and money in rural America and the effects this media manipulation has on federal policies. For this, we will study the curious case of China in Iowa.

Targeting the Heartland

Chinese interest in rural America is not new. Indeed, Iowa and China have been linked by trade for some time. Between 2008 and 2017, Iowa exports to China grew by 39 percent while exports of goods to China from the rest of the world decreased by negative 5 percent. During that same timeframe, Iowan exports of services to China grew

¹³³ Conner Bailey, Leif Jensen, and Elizabeth Ransom, *Rural America in a Globalizing World: Problems and Prospects for the 2010s* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2014), p.1.

at an amazing 497 percent, while the rest of the world was at a comparably tame 65 percent. In 2016, the China market was second only to the Canadian market for Iowa agriculture products.¹³⁴ China imported nearly \$154 billion worth of goods from the U.S. in 2017, therefore Iowa's \$2.5 billion of that seems paltry but not to Iowa when looked at the micro-level. Iowa was heavily dependent on the Chinese market to sell its oilseeds and grain, meat products, and other agricultural commodities is credited in creating 23,600 Iowa jobs, nearly 2 percent of all Iowa jobs.¹³⁵ If Iowa sees China as a growth opportunity, it would seem that China understands this.

Countries are not in the business of doing what is best for other countries at the cost of their people. In the global economy today, countries vie for market position through comparative and competitive advantages. There is a reason why China imports products from Iowa and China also has a reputation of allowing foreign industries into the country, learning, and then adopting those practices, and then domestic industries crowd out the foreign competitor.¹³⁶ This leaves the foreign company not only without the China market but also without its intellectual property (IP).

China does not stop at forced IP transfer from within China. It also has earned a reputation as a top-rate purveyor of economic espionage and stealing trade secrets, and

¹³⁴ US-China Business Council, "Growth in Iowa Exports," [Www.uschina.org](http://www.uschina.org), April 19, 2018, accessed May 07, 2021, <https://www.uschina.org/reports/us-exports/iowa>.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Paul Goldstein, "Intellectual Property and China: Is China Stealing American IP?" Stanford Law School, April 10, 2018, accessed May 09, 2021, <https://law.stanford.edu/2018/04/10/intellectual-property-china-china-stealing-american-ip/>.

American agricultural products have not missed their attention.¹³⁷ Although the theft of American agricultural IP goes back to the heart of the Cold War¹³⁸, China has been thought to have started in earnest in the early 2010s. Since that time, the U.S. Department of Justice has earned multiple convictions of Chinese nationals attempting to steal genetic code or actual samples of U.S. agricultural products, nearly 7 percent of all Chinese nationals convicted in the U.S. of some type of espionage since 2010. According to Genoways, the U.S. and China are in the midst of a high-stakes battle to be the world's breadbasket.¹³⁹ This is not just about feeding a nation, which China is struggling to do and a boost from American IP would be greatly beneficial, but about commanding a powerful foreign policy tool, and Iowan farmers are caught in the middle.

Mr. Xi Goes to Iowa

Why would one of China's largest newspapers, *China's Daily*, an SOE and official publication of the PRC, be interested in taking out an advertisement in the form of an insert in an Iowan newspaper with a daily circulation of approximately only 30,000 and is on the verge of ceasing print editions.¹⁴⁰ The *Des Moines Register* may be the

¹³⁷ Evan Burke., "Survey of Chinese-linked Espionage in the United States Since 2000," Survey of Chinese-linked Espionage in the United States Since 2000 | Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2021, accessed May 07, 2021, <https://www.csis.org/programs/technology-policy-program/survey-chinese-linked-espionage-united-states-2000>.

¹³⁸ Ted Genoways, "Corn Wars," *The New Republic*, August 17, 2015, accessed May 07, 2021, <https://newrepublic.com/article/122441/corn-wars>.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Brent Antisdell, "Billionaire Stine Gets Coronavirus Loans. Cargill Gets \$822,000-per-job Aid. Register Circulation Is in a Free Fall.," CITYVIEW, July 13, 2020, accessed April 03, 2021, <http://www.dmcityview.com/civic->

pride of the publishing world in the Hawkeye State but major international newspapers are not clamoring to advertise in it, let alone taking out a 4-page spread like the *Daily* did in September 2018.¹⁴¹ One would be easily forgiven to overlook the “China Watch” supplement as an insignificant event as it was specifically designed to look like a legitimate news article.

For years, China has run “China Watch” sections in the major American newspapers the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* to influence public opinion. U.S. officials have labeled “China Watch” a “broad malign influence campaign”¹⁴² in the United States. “They [China] employ a whole of government approach using political, economic, commercial, military, and information tools to influence U.S. public opinion.”¹⁴³ In 2018, “China Watch” came for rural America.

The advert consisted of the following: “One quasi-article in the advert was the story of Xi Jinping’s trip to Iowa in the 1980s. Another section informed the reader of how the women’s liberation movement in China occurred.”¹⁴⁴ On the front page of the

skinny/2020/07/01/cargill-gets-822000-in-aid-for-each-of-14-new-jobs-death-throes-for-print-register-a-geography-puzzler/.

¹⁴¹ Donnelle Eller, “Chinese-backed Newspaper Insert Tries to Undermine Iowa Farm Support for Trump, Trade War,” *Des Moines Register*, September 26, 2018, accessed April 03, 2021, <https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/money/agriculture/2018/09/24/china-daily-watch-advertisement-tries-sway-iowa-farm-support-trump-trade-war-tariffs/1412954002/>.

¹⁴² Chris Chappell, “China’s Propaganda War Attacks Iowa,” YouTube, October 03, 2018, accessed April 06, 2021, <https://youtu.be/-rH5GNuUEcE>.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

advert, the article “Duel Undermines Benefits of Trade” explains to “Iowans the trade war between China and the United States was the fault of President Trump and it hurt the economy of Iowa. Furthermore, with U.S. midterm elections only 6 weeks away at the time, the advert suggested that perhaps the good people of Iowa should consider the trade war in their voting preferences.”¹⁴⁵ Of course, the price for putting articles critical of China’s leader in a local newspaper would be going to prison.¹⁴⁶

According to prominent China-watcher Chris Chappell, “Placing propaganda in an Iowan newspaper is one small piece of the CCP’s plan to undermine rural support for the Trump Administration and its tough trade policies concerning China. It also takes advantage of America’s democratic process and free press.”¹⁴⁷ He continues “the Chinese regime wanted people in Iowa to read it and probably believed that it was a small enough newspaper that it would not make waves outside of Iowa. China probably did not expect that the maneuver would eventually make its way to President Trump.” “China is actually placing propaganda ads in the Des Moines Register and other papers, made to look like news,” Trump tweeted.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Emily Feng, “Prominent Critic of Xi Jinping And Communist Party Sentenced To 18 Years in Prison,” NPR, September 22, 2020, accessed April 03, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2020/09/22/915558372/prominent-critic-of-xi-jinping-and-communist-party-sentenced-to-18-years-in-pris>.

¹⁴⁷ Chris Chappell, “China’s Propaganda War Attacks Iowa,” YouTube, October 03, 2018, accessed April 06, 2021, <https://youtu.be/-rH5GNuUEcE>.

¹⁴⁸ Donnelle Eller, “Citing Ad in Des Moines Register, Trump Accuses China of Meddling in U.S. Elections,” Des Moines Register, September 28, 2018, accessed April 03, 2021, <https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/politics/2018/09/26/donald-trump-des-moines-register-ad-attack-china-meddling-united-nations-president-election/1434194002/>.

There are reasons Iowa gets all the presidential hopefuls, it is critical in presidential elections. The U.S. announced \$2 billion of additional tariffs on Chinese imports. According to President Trump, “The U.S. tariffs were meant to be a response to years of unfair trade practices by China”¹⁴⁹ and “state-sponsored intellectual property theft.”¹⁵⁰ An example of this theft is Chinese spies stealing corn seeds from Iowa; which the insert did not make a note of despite around the same time the sentencing to prison of a Chinese national for stealing corn seeds from Iowa.¹⁵¹

Chappell continued his analysis that the feature article in the insert, “Duel Undermines Benefits of Trade,” threatened Iowans that the Chinese could cut out Iowa altogether and get their soybeans from Brazil. It continues with blaming U.S. politicians for the trade war and not so subtly warning against voting for someone that would support the trade war.¹⁵²

Iowa first established trade ties to China in the 1970s, at the time the *Des Moines Register* called the Iowans doing business in China the “Iowa mafia.”¹⁵³ Since that time,

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Department of Justice, “Chinese National Sentenced to Prison for Conspiracy to Steal Trade Secrets,” The United States Department of Justice, October 05, 2016, accessed April 04, 2021, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/chinese-national-sentenced-prison-conspiracy-steal-trade-secrets>.

¹⁵² Chris Chappell.

¹⁵³ Kyle Munson, “The Rise of the ‘Iowa Mafia’ in China, from a Governor to Xi’s ‘old Friends’,” *Des Moines Register*, September 14, 2020, accessed April 05, 2021, <https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/local/columnists/kyle-munson/2017/11/09/china-iowa-mafia-beijing-xi-jingping-branstad-dvorchak-old-friends/784205001/>.

relations have flourished with the University of Iowa boasting 10 percent of its student population as Chinese. Furthermore, these foreign students reportedly contribute approximately \$170 million to the local economy.¹⁵⁴

After Xi visited Muscatine, Iowa, in 1985, the small city saw a boom in Chinese investment. A group of Chinese officials most recently visited Muscatine in 2018 to “check on conditions” about the trade war.¹⁵⁵ It sounds like the perfect place for the CCP to start changing U.S. policies through the infiltration of the local economy.

Did It Work?

If China did intend to use a rural American newspaper to sway public opinion to the point that it changed U.S. federal policies the question comes down to, did it work? The answer is difficult, complicated, and not straightforward; and, most likely not answerable with yes or no. This is due to the lack of data and research on the topic.

The then U.S. Ambassador to China and former Governor of Iowa, Terry Branstad, claimed that “China Watch” was “doubling down on [their] bullying by running propaganda ads in our free press.”¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, President Trump responded to

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Jeanne Whalen, “This Iowa City Forged an Unusual Friendship with China and Its President. Then Came the Soybean Tariffs.,” *The Washington Post*, September 14, 2018, accessed April 05, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/this-iowa-city-forged-an-unusual-friendship-with-china-and-its-president-then-came-the-soybean-tariffs/2018/09/14/e81d426c-ad6d-11e8-b1da-ff7faa680710_story.html.

¹⁵⁶ Josh Funk, “Chinese Broadens Its Propaganda Drive to Heartland America,” AP NEWS, October 20, 2018, accessed April 04, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/b8fe16a513de4c0e93a93c7f6be162e7>.

the insert by tweeting, “We are beating them on Trade, opening markets, and the farmers will make a fortune when this is over!”¹⁵⁷

According to the *Register*, “the farmers in Muscatine were concerned about things like intellectual property theft and supported the U.S. taking a stronger stand”¹⁵⁸ and that Iowans “may not appreciate trying to be manipulated by a foreign government.”¹⁵⁹

From both the literature review and the subsequent study of non-academic sources, it is clear that the only consequence of the “China Watch” advertising in the *Register* was angering Trump more, probably causing him to double down on his China trade policies. In that regard, the advert was a failure. However, it may have had a significant impact on other federal policies or federal race outcomes.

The advert ran roughly 2 months before the 2018 mid-term elections. The elections had the following outcomes, which analysts and experts had difficulty interpreting because of the split ticket nature of the outcome:

¹⁵⁷ Donnelle Eller, “Citing Ad in Des Moines Register, Trump Accuses China of Meddling in U.S. Elections,” *Des Moines Register*, September 28, 2018, accessed April 03, 2021, <https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/politics/2018/09/26/donald-trump-des-moines-register-ad-attack-china-meddling-united-nations-president-election/1434194002/>.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Donnelle Eller, “Chinese-backed Newspaper Insert Tries to Undermine Iowa Farm Support for Trump, Trade War,” *Des Moines Register*, September 26, 2018, accessed April 03, 2021, <https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/money/agriculture/2018/09/24/china-daily-watch-advertisement-tries-sway-iowa-farm-support-trump-trade-war-tariffs/1412954002/>.

- In the congressional races, however, voters were more concerned about national-level policies and this is where Chinese influence may have been felt. According to the *Register*, “trade and tariffs passed down by the Trump Administration rocked the state’s agricultural economy”¹⁶⁰ and this may have been the reason that Democrats picked up three of the state’s four congressional seats, unseating two incumbent Republicans in doing so. However, Pfannenstiel made it clear in her article that this conclusion is speculation as “a lack of exit polling in Iowa makes it difficult to say for sure.”¹⁶¹ Iowan exit polls did discover that 52 percent of Iowan voters had unfavorable views of Trump while 45 percent had favorable, with the suburbs of Des Moines going against Trump-affiliated candidates.¹⁶²
- The Iowa Governor’s race was won by a Republican, who focused on the privatization of Medicaid, state-level tax cuts, and curbing access to abortions. Iowans did not take into account a trade war or Chinese friendship overtures at the highest level of state politics.
- Similar to the Governor’s race, Republicans won the offices of secretary of state and agriculture. One would think that the Secretary of Agriculture would be a state-level office that should be affected by an agricultural trade war.

¹⁶⁰ Brianne Pfannenstiel, “Results of Split-ticket Voting in Iowa Confound Experts after Midterm Election,” *Des Moines Register*, November 08, 2018, accessed April 08, 2021, <https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/politics/elections/2018/11/07/iowa-election-2018-results-midterm-elections-kim-reynolds-abby-finkenauer-cindy-axne-house-takeaway/1732470002/>.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

Likely the safest way to interpret these results is that Iowans separated state-level Republicans from national-level Republicans and their respective policies.

Interestingly, in the 2020 elections, Republicans stormed back and won three of the four congressional seats, equaling what it had before the 2018 mid-term election. This is another curious outcome as the trade war had not abated. It is possible that the lack of Chinese interference in the 2020 elections made the difference for Republicans but then again, the 2020 election cycle had a lot of anomalies to it.

One very fascinating result of the 2020 congressional election in Iowa District 2 was that a Republican won the open seat which had previously been filled by a Democrat for seven consecutive terms. In this, there is no evidence of Chinese propaganda backfiring but there is also no evidence of the now 3-year-old propaganda hurting the Trump-affiliated candidate.

However, until the trade war is settled, China's billions of dollars of retaliatory tariffs could mean pain for Iowa's exporters of soy, corn, and beef. "The tariffs and counter-tariffs we are enduring in this trade war with China and the U.S. are having a real impact on Iowa farmers."¹⁶³ According to an Iowa State University study, Iowa farmers were projected to lose up to \$2.2 billion from Chinese counter-tariffs. According to John Crespi, an economics professor at Iowa State and co-author of the study, "Is that a lot? Yeah, that is a big number."¹⁶⁴ Specifically, Crespi noted that Iowa's soybean industry

¹⁶³ KCCI, "Study: Trade Could Impact Iowa Agriculture by \$2 Billion," <https://www.kcrg.com>, August 27, 2018, accessed April 04, 2021, <https://www.kcrg.com/content/news/Study-Trade-tariffs-could-could-impact-Iowa-agriculture-by-2-billion-494475901.html>.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

could lose up to \$891 million, and the corn industry could lose as much as \$9 million. Former U.S. National Security Council spokesperson Tommy Vietor called China's target tariffs a "Pretty savvy political play being run by China" for targeting Iowa with tariffs on corn, soy, pork, and other agricultural products that hurt midwestern farmers, conveniently also the people who tend to vote for Trump and Republicans.¹⁶⁵

Conclusion

Even though China runs paid advertisements in major U.S. newspapers the choice to place its propaganda in the *Des Moines Register* highlights China's interest in what Abigale Grace calls "subnational outreach."¹⁶⁶ This, combined with China's other subnational activities like Confucius Institutes, United Front work, and some of the Belt and Road Initiative activities in rural areas of the United States constitutes a real threat in the form of foreign influence to U.S. policies. China has targeted state and local governments because they are less likely to be attuned to the wider implications of Chinese influence campaigns.

With operations specializing in influence at the micro-level, rather than what the Russians have done by focusing on national elections, China desires to influence Americans' view of China at the individual level. The end for both Russian and Chinese influence operations is the same even though the scale and scope are different. China is content to take things slow, start at the bottom and work its way to the top while Russia is

¹⁶⁵ Mark Niquette and Jennifer Jacobs, "China Looks to Influence Iowa in Trade War Over Trump Tariffs," Bloomberg.com, September 23, 2018, accessed April 04, 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-09-23/china-looks-to-influence-iowa-in-trade-war-over-trump-tariffs>.

¹⁶⁶ Abigail Grace, "China's Influence Operations Are Pinpointing America's Weaknesses,"

heavier-handed. But even though the blows do not land all at once or as heavy, China's activities of turning the U.S. political, media, and economic systems against themselves constitute an existential threat to those systems, the American Creed, and American ideology.

Unfortunately, aside from correlative circumstantial evidence, there just is not enough research and empirical evidence to unequivocally say that China is trying to use rural media and newspapers to influence United States federal policies. An accusation of this level must be beyond private opinions and requires more research or, if the federal government has more concrete evidence of Chinese influence operations, it must be declassified and released publicly, or at the very least provided to Congress if it cannot be unclassified.¹⁶⁷ The U.S. government determined that China decided not to interfere in the 2020 election;¹⁶⁸ therefore, it has had plenty of time to determine if Chinese advertisements in an Iowa newspaper were enough to influence policy.

Despite the lack of direct evidence of actual policy tampering, there is no doubt that Chinese influence operations have matured and are sophisticated enough that American academic, political, and media classes would rather talk about Russia's obvious influence attempts and ignore China's veiled influence operations.

Exposing Chinese influence and its maturing neo-imperial and neo-colonial practices will be an incredibly politically hard task because so much money and

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ ODNI Office of Strategic Communications, "Foreign Threats to the 2020 U.S. Federal Elections," ODNI.gov, March 16, 2021, accessed April 13, 2021, <https://www.odni.gov/index.php/newsroom/reports-publications/reports-publications-2021/item/2192-intelligence-community-assessment-on-foreign-threats-to-the-2020-u-s-federal-elections>.

important people are involved.¹⁶⁹ However, the American ideals of freedom of expression and speech are worth any price and cannot be compromised by foreign influences, otherwise, the rest of the American ideals, like free and fair elections and democracy, will also fail. Because the stakes are so high, this demands further study.

¹⁶⁹ Janet Lorin and Brandon Kochkodin, “Harvard Leads U.S. Colleges That Received \$1 Billion from China,” Bloomberg.com, February 6, 2020, accessed April 10, 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-02-06/harvard-leads-u-s-colleges-that-received-1-billion-from-china>.

Chapter 3: Doomed to Repeat History: Chinese Neo-Imperialism and the Revival of the Tribute System

“Opportunities multiply as they are seized.”¹⁷⁰

Some argue that modern history began around 200 years ago with the American Revolution and that the West has molded and shaped the world order ever since. The very definition of modernity was being Western. However, what would happen if developing countries no longer looked to the West for leadership in cultural and economic aspects? What if a non-Western country became a regional hegemon? A global hegemon? In this new era, China could be the predominant norm setter.

In this chapter, it will be argued that no matter the amount of engagement and accommodation, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) will not conform to international norms and will push for either its own, special norms or new global norms to better reflect its priorities. the results of this non-conformity will have far-reaching and significant economic, political, and cultural ramifications.

The CCP’s goals are as large as China’s geography and population. These goals are different from the conventional Western state which values a traditional world order. The CCP believes that China’s ascendancy is assured as the Middle Kingdom and the center of “the old tributary system.”¹⁷¹ If this system could be newly reborn as ancient Chinese ideas of superiority begin to reassert themselves. Kevin Alfred Strom wrote that

¹⁷⁰ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Goodreads, accessed July 05, 2021, https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/1771.Sun_Tzu.

¹⁷¹ Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), p.7.

one must only look at whom they are not allowed to criticize to know who the true master is.¹⁷² As China continues its unfettered rise despite global, or at least globally agreed upon, norms in human, civil, and intellectual property rights, it will usher in an end for Western-definition dominance of those norms.

In addition to China's neo-imperial aspirations and actions, this chapter will reveal that the current era in Chinese history is more reminiscent of the pre-modern tributary system than not. China transcends the modern understanding of what is expected of a state. The slow understanding by the West will cause major impacts throughout the world's political, economic, and cultural norms, possibly causing a divergence and the acceptance of two sets of norms.

Outline

This chapter studies the effects of a transcendent China, a China that is a major world power if not the world power, and the effects that China's neo-imperialist growth strategy will have on the world order and Western values. That China is a substitute for Western norms and values and its primary weapon, its economy, is used as a sophisticated propaganda system. It will also deliver an analytical approach to China's rise and its strategy of neo-imperialism. Forecasting techniques and case studies are applied to compare and discover the prospects of China's rise.

¹⁷² Nayeli Lomeli, "Fact Check: Quote Falsely Attributed to French Writer and Philosopher Voltaire," *USA Today*, May 30, 2021, accessed June 13, 2021, <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/factcheck/2021/05/30/fact-check-quote-viral-post-misattributed-voltaire/7415187002/>

A review of previous academic research on this topic follows, presented in a topic-by-topic manner. The review will start with studies focused on neo-imperialism, including case studies of possible Chinese neo-imperialism in Africa and a side-by-side comparison of Chinese and U.S. neo-imperialist actions, arguments that despite blustering China is not in a position to change norms, and finally, arguments that China will indeed be predominate. After establishing the historical studies, there will be an in-depth analysis of the findings and a synthesis of examples and more current events. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings and how they continue to advance and recommendations for future and continued study.

Picking Up Where It Left Off, Neo-Imperialism in Africa

Lumumba-Kasongo studied the Africa-China economic relationship since the 1990s and discovered that despite the prevalent thinking of two developing regions aiding one another, the opposite was true - China was taking economic and political advantage of Africa. Using case studies of previous imperial and colonialist actions and empirical data of Chinese export and imports with Africa, Lumumba-Kasongo found little difference between the actions of Western colonialists and that of more recent Chin neo-colonialism.¹⁷³

Not unlike Lumumba-Kasongo, Adrian Hadland also used a historical evaluation to try and determine whether China's actions in Africa should be considered neo-

¹⁷³ Tukumbi Lumumba-Kasongo, "China-Africa Relations: A Neo-Imperialism or a Neo-Colonialism? A Reflection*," *African and Asian Studies* 10, no. 2-3 (2011): accessed June 12, 2021, doi:10.1163/156921011x587040, p.241.

imperialist.¹⁷⁴ He focused on contrasting the 1880 to the 1915-colonial timeframe to Chinese modern actions in Africa. Hadland concluded that “the multiple agendas of the actors and the role of ‘compradors’ through to patterns of investment and financing”¹⁷⁵ were nearly identical between the two eras.¹⁷⁶ Indeed, it seems that the CCP has studied past methods of exploiting Africa and has reused them.

Alfred Zack-Williams produced a very in-depth study on neo-imperialism and African development. He opined that when people think of imperialism, they give too much credit to military intervention and operations, and that “imperialist subjugation of the continent... has been less overt, occurring through the sphere of market subjugation, transfer pricing, profits repatriation and asymmetrical economic partnering agreement leading to deep integration, which may become too restrictive for African Governments.”¹⁷⁷ Zack-Williams discovered that Chinese actions in less developed countries were likely to fall within the definition of neo-imperialism. Zack-Williams even goes as far as calling the “construction of railways, harbors, roads, and mines the imperialist center of the bourgeois imperialism.”¹⁷⁸ Although he does not say it, there is

¹⁷⁴ Adrian Hadland, “If the Hat Fits: Revisiting Chinese “Neo-Imperialism” in Africa from a Comparative Historical Perspective,” *Asian Politics & Policy* 4, no. 4 (2012): accessed June 12, 2021, doi:10.1111/j.1943-0787.2012.01372.x, p.471.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 85.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 85.

¹⁷⁷ Alfred Zack-Williams, “Neo-imperialism and African Development,” *Review of African Political Economy* 40, no. 136 (2013): accessed June 12, 2021, doi:10.1080/03056244.2013.797759, p.179.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 184.

only one country currently doing these construction projects en masse in the developing world and that is China. Accusing China of being both bourgeois and imperial is a heavy accusation, cutting to the very core of what the CCP says it is not.

Solomon Lai Okajare examines Chinese engagements in Africa and believes that it will cause a jealous reaction from the West. As this “Sino-Western rivalry” intensifies, Okajare believes that China will continue to pour economic resources into Africa in an attempt to outspend the West, which is supposedly content with an increase in diplomacy but not economic stimulus.¹⁷⁹ China’s spending will cause a “skewed international economic system” in Africa as they rely on China for monetary support and becomes a revival of the historic Chinese tribute system.¹⁸⁰

More than Just Africa

Khushboo Ejaz highlights China’s growing economic power to enslave, smaller, more developing nations in what he describes as a “neo-imperialist strategy.”¹⁸¹ In his study, he contrasts China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), with that of historical imperialism in Pakistan and as being completely beneficial for China while having decidedly mixed results for Pakistan.

¹⁷⁹ Solomon Tai Okajare, “Sino-Western Rivalry as a New Trajectory of Neo-Imperialism: A Critical Challenge for African Diplomacy and Development,” *Social Transformations: Journal of the Global South* 3, no. 1 (2015): accessed June 12, 2021, doi:10.13185/st2015.03104, p.42.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 48.

¹⁸¹ Khushboo Ejaz, “Neo-Imperialism: A Case Study of China Pakistan Economic Corridor,” *Journal of Politics and International Studies*, 1st ser., 5 (June 2019): accessed June 12, 2021, http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/politicsAndInternational/PDF/7_v5_1_2019.pdf, p.86.

Indeed, Ejaz leaves no doubt where he stands on the topic with his declaration “The objective of this paper is to argue that CPEC is more a neo-imperialist strategy of China which might not create win-win outcomes.”¹⁸² He concludes that China is using economic neo-imperialism to control Pakistan’s strategically important territory.¹⁸³ Much like the U.S.S.R. strove to have an Indian Ocean port via Pakistan. It is hard to argue Ejaz’s conclusions as China and the BRI have a history of debt-trap diplomacy.¹⁸⁴

Masako Ikegami agrees with Ejaz and sees China’s problem as more than just an Africa issue, it is a fundamental CCP issue. He believes China does not understand how to peaceably grow; that the CCP’s revolutionary mindset makes conflict inevitable. Unlike other power nations, according to Ikegami, China is continuously creating disputes and instability whenever it has foreign relations, including with other authoritarian regimes.¹⁸⁵ Ikegami claims that if there is a new Cold War between the West and China, it is because the CCP does not behave within the prevailing norms of international relations and accuses China of using a neo-imperial method of investment or “economic cooperation” to fuel its expansionistic goals. Ikegami believes this is because

¹⁸² Ibid., 94.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 95.

¹⁸⁴ Steven Lee Myers, “An Alliance of Autocracies? China Wants to Lead a New World Order,” *New York Times*, March 29, 2021, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/29/world/asia/china-us-russia.html>

¹⁸⁵ Masako Ikegami, “Neo-Imperialism: China’s Quasi-Manchukuo Policy toward North Korea, Mongolia, and Myanmar,” *Tamkang Journal of International Affairs*, 4th ser., 14 (April 1, 2011): doi:10.6185/TJIA.V.14.N4.P61P97, p.94.

China is incredibly “politically vulnerable.”¹⁸⁶ To overcome this weakness, Ikegami contrasts modern China with pre-World War II Japan; both have “a large investment in economic infrastructure or extracting natural resources, military interventions for protecting economic interests, and social-political absorption employing puppet governments.”¹⁸⁷ He forecasts that it could lead to the same outcome as pre-World War II Japan.¹⁸⁸

Zhang Caiguo and Liu Shou-yi, in separate studies, respectively looked at the roots of neo-imperialism and defined it as unilateralist and foreign influence in nature - imposing one country’s values on another country and interfering in the domestic policies and decisions of the latter country.¹⁸⁹¹⁹⁰ Liu interestingly goes a little bit further than Zhang and finds that neo-imperialism is based upon a “materialistic foundation.”¹⁹¹ Although this may sound quite ideological, it fits well with China’s BRI that is ostensibly focused on economic growth. Although neither Zhang nor Liu do not specifically study

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 88.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 85.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 92.

¹⁸⁹ Caiguo Zhang, “The Emergence of Neo-Imperialism and Its Criticism,” accessed June 12, 2021, https://en.cnki.com.cn/Article_en/CJFDTTotal-WZDX200601015.htm

¹⁹⁰ Shou-yi Liu, “The Fundamental Contents and Background of the Neo-imperialism Theory,” accessed June 12, 2021, https://en.cnki.com.cn/Article_en/CJFDTTotal-XYSZ200503003.htm

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

China, based on their findings, China would fit well into their models of what neo-imperialists are doing.

Bin Yu begins his research with a quote from Lenin, “Imperialism... is the separation of ownership from the people” and goes on to compare Lenin’s definition to more recent actions.¹⁹² According to Bin, the key factor on whether imperialism is occurring is money being exchanged for physical resources, labor, or access to territory and specifically labels the exchange of those resources for IOUs the height of neo-imperialism.¹⁹³ With China’s BRI model using IOUs and the aforementioned debt-trap diplomacy in the form of massive Chinese loans to developing nations, Bin would likely agree that China is currently the largest conveyor of neo-imperialism according to his definition.

Morag M. Kersel and Christina Luke studied the resurgence of historical claims and traditions as evidence of neo-imperialism. These historical claims, or cultural states, are fueling a rise of neo-imperialism as nations attempt to claw back what they believed was theirs.¹⁹⁴ The authors found that instead of “open and honest dialogue” between the parties, the neo-imperialist side is increasingly tempted to use their military, political, or

¹⁹² Bin Yu, “Neo-imperialism, the Final Stage of Imperialism,” *International Critical Thought* 10, no. 4 (2020): accessed June 12, 2021, doi:10.1080/21598282.2020.1871800, p.496.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 503.

¹⁹⁴ Morag M. Kersel and Christina Luke, “Civil Societies? Heritage Diplomacy and Neo-Imperialism,” in *Global Heritage: A Reader* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), p.70.

economic might to take what they believe belonged to them.¹⁹⁵ Again, as the other researchers noted above, Kersel and Luke do not specifically call out China but their findings seem to indict the current aggressive economic and military actions of China as neo-imperialist.

Ruan Zongze has a different viewpoint than his contemporaries. Instead of focusing on Chinese neo-imperialism or U.S. hegemony, he compares the two side-by-side and finds that they are not all that different in their respective neo-imperialism.¹⁹⁶ Perhaps that is why the two countries are finding it so difficult to work together, perhaps they are too alike? Ruan's conclusions highlight that the two "seek absolute hegemony, [global] leadership, security, and military superiority."¹⁹⁷ He continues that neo-imperialism has deep traditions in the respective countries' historical and current developments and presently both use a form of foreign engagement to sway their respective targets, though both countries supposedly are not above using isolation, containment, or even preemptive strike to get what they want. Ruan closes his study with a warning that both countries may suffer the same failure that other imperialist regimes have had with overexpansion.¹⁹⁸

Zhang Yao followed Ruan's thesis of the neo-imperial similarities of the U.S. and China and added that the two are also similar in geographic resources, both think they

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 92.

¹⁹⁶ Ruan Zongze, "Neo-Imperialism and the Integration Doctrine," accessed June 12, 2021, https://en.cnki.com.cn/Article_en/CJFDTotol-MGYJ200203001.htm

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

have divine right to rule, and international hegemonic norms default to a bi-polar world.¹⁹⁹ Where Zhang and Ruan diverge is that Zhang does not believe neo-imperialism in and of itself is sufficient to create a new world order or challenge existing norms as, eventually, the rest of the world will reject a country that tries to employ neo-imperialism.²⁰⁰

It's Not a Problem, is It?

As noted above, some researchers acknowledge China's aggressive behaviors but do not think China can evolve global norms by itself. David Alton takes on the theory of the end of Western history and the beginning of China's world order. Alton began his research that others who believed this theory were too focused on political anecdotes of the West's loss of power and China's rise in the areas of population numbers, economic production, and cultural wealth. He believes the theory in and of itself was anti-China or a desire to pull China down. He noted that the world was too diverse and that Western societies that were used to the freedom of thought, action, and speech would ever allow one country, whether it be China or any other, to be the sole fountain of values, even though the U.S. came close. Alton put the odds of this happening as "not historically probable" as there was no demand for a unipolar values world.²⁰¹ Indeed, Alton believes the CCP has no desire to rule the world as the current system is working very well for it

¹⁹⁹ Yao Zhang, "A Comment on Neo-Imperialism," accessed June 12, 2021, https://en.cnki.com.cn/Article_en/CJFDTotat-SJJZ200307005.htm

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ David Alton, "When China Rules the World," *Journal of International Business Ethics* 5, no. 1 (2012): accessed June 12, 2021, ProQuest, p.60.

and being in charge also means you take all the blame. He continues that because China is not a nation-state or multi-nation state, rather, it is a “civilization state,” there is no real need for democracy for its people and it would not succeed in pressing its norms as it does not have the requisite background to do so - authoritarian governments work for civilization states but not ruling over a diversified group.²⁰²

Alton’s take is surprisingly missing important considerations like how human rights, or lack thereof, in China affects human rights in other countries or that China may be missing a more global view but that may not stop them from trying. Which would have its knock-on effects. He may be forgiven for not knowing that since his study, China has annexed territories of Southeast Asian countries.²⁰³ However, as of the time he wrote, he should have known that being Chinese was more than being from the Han-dominated ethnic group. Especially for such diverse and diasporic people as would be labeled as Chinese ethnicity - Uighur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, Cantonese, and those from non-Han majority ancestry. These groups are specific nations exactly because of the opposite of what Alton says, they were historically not a part of the Chinese civilization state.

Gian Casadio’s study focuses on modern China’s “geopolitical and socioeconomic factors” while agreeing with the other academics that China’s long history makes it different and stands apart from that of the Western countries.²⁰⁴ One factor that

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Deutsche Welle, “Beijing Seeking to ‘change Facts’ in South China Sea: DW: 19.09.2014,” DW.COM, September 19, 2019, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/beijing-seeking-to-change-facts-in-south-china-sea/a-17935857>

²⁰⁴ Gian Casadio, “When China Rules the World,” *Asia Pacific Business Review* 21, no. 2 (2013): accessed June 12, 2021, doi:10.1080/13602381.2013.777560, p.65.

Casadio delves into that the others do not is that throughout China's long history, it has survived off of international trade or trade-like mechanisms (like the tribute system), and it cannot survive without it (trade or tribute).²⁰⁵ Casadio, like Alton, subsequently challenges the theory of the inevitable rise of China but for a separate reason than Alton's. The West's flexibility is its greatest asset; the ability to change will allow its values to survive despite a gain in China's overall power. Furthermore, Casadio aims at many of China's structural problems that were created by political agendas, not market-driven forces. He specifically cites "increasingly aging population and low birth rate, a dramatic gender imbalance and overinvestment and too much dependence on exports."²⁰⁶ Casadio predicted these issues in 2013 and recently they have made the news.²⁰⁷ China's rise, according to Casadio, is far from certain and it could just as easily backslide into a developing nation as it could rise to new world order.²⁰⁸

Additionally, Xavier Richet takes a very novel approach against the China-rise theory. His argument is more of a "will the boat sink the water" perspective in which the CCP may inadvertently sabotage its industries so that they become less competitive by

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 65.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 66.

²⁰⁷ John Ruwitch, "China's Birthrate Drops, As Census Data Warn of Aging Population," NPR, May 11, 2021, accessed June 13, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/05/11/995490687/chinas-birth-rate-drops-as-census-data-warn-of-aging-population?t=1623594584449>

²⁰⁸ Casadio, 65.

pushing them to do too much too fast.²⁰⁹ Richet adds that China's increasing jingoistic actions and words on the global stage while pushing its industries, for example, the CCP's efforts with Huawei (which will be discussed later in this study), will turn off once receptive host nations.²¹⁰

It is Inevitable, isn't It?

And then there are a few academics who believe that China's concept of world order is certain and the sooner the West realizes it has already lost the civilization war, the better it will be for everyone. Zhu Dongli argued that the Chinese model of modernity is unavoidable and is the "culmination" because the Western model is not sustainable.²¹¹ Zhu believes that the "world is currently on the eve of fundamental change. The decline of the [American] world hegemony may reshape the way of human development and modernization in [next] 100 years" and that only China is positioned correctly to lead the world into a state of "global socialism."²¹² Zhu's argument rests on his confidence that Western values rely on colonization - that Western countries enjoy their freedoms because of production and manufacturing models created in cheap labor countries and that value freedoms cannot continue if the field was level.

²⁰⁹ Xavier Richet, "China Rules Globalization and Political Transformation," *China Perspectives* 2011, no. 2 (2011): accessed June 12, 2021, doi:10.4000/chinaperspectives.5588, p.77.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 38.

²¹¹ Zhu Dongli, "A Way Out of a Global Dead-End," *International Critical Thought* 1, no. 1 (2011): accessed June 12, 2021, doi:10.1080/21598282.2011.566045, p.109.

²¹² Ibid., 114.

Much like Zhu, Jeffery Barlow's research led him to believe that the West only currently has the upper hand because of colonialism and that Western society and norms are not uniquely superior to Chinese, only through force of arms and economic manipulations have they become norms. Nevertheless, Barlow tempers his obsequiousness of Chinese political abilities by noting that China has done itself no favors by adopting Maoism, which he labeled as an extremist ideology and could blind the CCP to its weaknesses and could lead to further conflict with the rest of the world. Still, Barlow believes such conflict would only be a small setback and the end of the West is close at hand and should be expected.²¹³

Academics and researchers seem to be evenly split between China possibly becoming a world power and global norm-maker and failing to do so. But what is not in question is that China is exhibiting neo-imperialist behavior in Africa and other locations, and it is spreading quickly. What follows is more current evidence of Chinese behaviors that reinforces this theory.

Elite Capture

Many elites around the world work more for the CCP than their own countries.²¹⁴ Hardly a month goes by without another prominent U.S. academic being investigated for

²¹³ Jeffery Barlow, "When China Rules the World," CORE, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://core.ac.uk/reader/48851520>

²¹⁴ Jichang Lulu Sinopsis, "United Nations with Chinese Characteristics: Elite Capture and Discourse Management on a Global Scale," July 20, 2019, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://sinopsis.cz/en/united-nations-with-chinese-characteristics-elite-capture-and-discourse-management-on-a-global-scale/>

working for the Chinese government.²¹⁵ These elites take a shallow view of what constitutes their self-interest and do not consider the long-term effects of their short-term decisions. Indeed, they are for sale to the highest bidder and there is no bidder with deeper pockets than the CCP. The elite are elite because they have a defining quality or merit, something that sets them apart. However, sometimes they can be too clever for their good, often with disastrous consequences for the non-elite.

One example is that elites pushed for China to join the World Trade Organization (WTO). The American public was told by the American elite that China needed to be allowed to join the WTO as it would benefit the everyday American by bringing down the costs of goods from China while opening the Chinese market to American goods. But the true cost of the Chinese WTO membership was hidden, and now, China has a near-monopoly on critical manufacturing.²¹⁶ However, possibly the biggest lie that elites told was that a liberalized Chinese market would eventually liberalize Chinese politics.²¹⁷ It has since been discovered that is not true and shortsighted elites continue to trade their integrity for the Shangri-La of the Chinese market.²¹⁸

These same elites covered up and continued to cover up, the migration of American jobs to China and the creation of a whole host of new problems. Including the

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Stephen Ezell, "Top 9 False Promises That China Made in Joining the World Trade Organization," The Innovation Files, September 22, 5, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.innovationfiles.org/top-9-false-promises-that-china-made-in-joining-the-world-trade-organization/>

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

national security implications of a hostile regime controlling worldwide critical supply chains.²¹⁹ Now, markets worldwide are so bound to China extraction is impossible without severely damaging one's home market. Furthermore, the CCP has used this newfound power to not only not liberalize its politics, but to become more authoritarian.

Interestingly, one of the reasons the elites were exposed was because an elite was cannibalized by his own for trying to stand up to China. In 2019, NBA executive Daryl Morey tweeted support for Hong Kong protestors in the face of Chinese oppression. His seemingly innocuous tweet caused the CCP to ban the NBA from airing games in China. This, in turn, caused the NBA to force a retraction from Morey and some of the NBA's biggest talents to label him as “uneducated.”²²⁰ These retractions and personal attacks were not aired or streamed directly to the Chinese market; they were first made on American soil. A man was attacked for uttering support for democracy because it threatened the CCP. This episode exposed the hypocrisy of several NBA players whose very livelihood is tied directly to the everyday fan that could be crushed by the Chinese regime.

This is but one example of how American elites seem to care more about protecting their profits over the system that allowed them to become the richest and most

²¹⁹ Don Lee, “As Coronavirus Cripples Global Supply Lines, More U.S. Firms Looking to Leave China,” Los Angeles Times, March 04, 2020, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2020-03-04/spreading-coronavirus-tears-apart-global-supply-chains>

²²⁰ Brian Phillips, “The NBA’s Convenient “Non-political” Stance Comes at a Cost,” The Ringer, October 07, 2019, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.theringer.com/nba/2019/10/7/20903442/nba-daryl-morey-rockets-hong-kong-joseph-tsai>

powerful in the first place. This also teaches that the CCP's brand of authoritarianism has reached a victory over liberal democracy - they can control the very speech of the elite anywhere in the world and not just in China.

More recently, the CCP, using an American elite as a puppet, has once again come to light. Or rather, the media made sure that every American would see one of their cultural elite kowtowing to the CCP.²²¹ Movie star John Cena was making the interview rounds for one of his new movies and he noted that Taiwan is a country. To most in the West, the innocuous slip of the tongue by an action movie star would not be a big deal, certainly not newsworthy. But the CCP immediately threatened to disallow the movie to be shown in mainland China, which caused Cena to produce an apology video, begging for the movie to be allowed, and eliciting a stream of approval from Chinese media.²²² He allowed his speech to be censored by the CCP.

Another example of putting profits above convictions and bowing to the CCP would be the actions of major companies like clothier H&M. H&M initially released statements that they would certify that Chinese Uighur slaves were not used in the production of its products. In response, the CCP removed the company's products from all Chinese online sites and its physical retail stores from online map applications. H&M quickly folded to the CCP's demands.²²³ Because of the amount of money tied up

²²¹ John Feng, "Chinese Media Calls John Cena's Apology 'an Example for Other Western Stars to Follow'," *Newsweek*, May 27, 2021, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.newsweek.com/china-media-calls-john-cena-apology-example-other-western-stars-1595342>

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Elizabeth Paton, "H&M Responds to a Firestorm in China over Xinjiang Cotton.," *New York Times*, March 31, 2021, accessed June 12, 2021,

between Western companies and China, it would be nearly impossible for a company to be expected to weather the onslaught by itself.

Whenever one of America's elite bows to the CCP's pressure by denouncing freedom of speech it hurts all Americans. This is another data point that American values can be bought and sold. But what if there was a price to be paid for selling one's values to a foreign government? What if by promoting the values of the CCP, Cerna or the NBA had to register as acting as a foreign agent? In the examples used above, they are acting in the interests and from the pressure of the CCP. In both cases, they are nothing more than propagandists trying to protect their interests at the cost of their fellow countrymen and the cost of their supposed values.

In the end, Cerna's, H&M's, and the NBA's stories say more about America than it does about China. The CCP is more committed to its values than America is to its own. It underscores the flaws and rots at the heart of uncontained capitalism and liberal democracy. Without true values, beyond profits, to guide, they are nothing. Furthermore, it begs the question of what is so wrong with Western culture that elite persons and companies feel the need to undermine their own espoused values and ultimately their long-term interests.

The Chinese government has realized that it can weaponize America's elite against itself. What started as an experiment of using Western policies against the Chinese has backfired. The CCP has taken Western values, corrupted them, and returned them. China has not been coy about using the West's money to try and perfect the

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/31/business/hm-responds-to-a-firestorm-in-china-over-xinjiang-cotton.html>

authoritarian state.²²⁴ Chinese professors even joke about stealing the West's intellectual property rights to then turn around and drive the West out of that technology.²²⁵ When this first occurred, it was all over the internet; now, references and articles are difficult to find.

Every time one of the elites, whether a person or company, bows to Chinese pressure to self-censure it harms the ability of any American to stand up against the demands. The CCP has taken America's greed and selfishness and used them against itself. In the end, Western culture is being absorbed by the authoritarian culture of the CCP. If you cannot freely express your feelings about China while you are physically located outside of China, then you are not truly free. You have no freedom of expression. And the elite of Western society is leading the way; if they do not awaken to their situation soon, they will wake up one day to realize they lost it all and being elite, they have the furthest to fall.

China has an interesting pattern of power projection. It is ostensibly offering help to other countries and at the same time attacking them literally and figuratively. For instance, in early to mid-2021, while its vaccine diplomacy is going full strength in South America, it is feuding with its Southeast Asian neighbors in the South China Sea and

²²⁴ Kathy Gilsinan and Yasmeeen Serhan, "Can the West Actually Ditch China?" The Atlantic, April 24, 2020, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2020/04/us-britain-dependence-china-trade/610615/>

²²⁵ James Gordon, "Trump Tweets Video of Chinese Professor Claiming That Beijing Can Swing US Policy," Daily Mail Online, December 08, 2020, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9029383/Trump-tweets-video-Chinese-professor-claiming-Beijing-swing-policy.html>

overwhelming them with “facts on the ground” because China can and the smaller, poorer neighbors cannot.²²⁶ All the while, China is dangling the carrot of economic and vaccine aid to these neighbors as long as they look the other way of the territorial encroachment. Furthermore, China has also recently been uncharacteristically loud about its near dominance, or at least its perceived near dominance, in the area of rare earths.²²⁷ Indicating that perhaps export markets for rare earths may have difficulty receiving them if they push China too hard on matters such as Taiwan or the use of ethnic slave labor in Xinjiang Province.²²⁸

These types of carrot and stick scenarios are a reminder that China knows it holds the power. This is how the CCP neo-imperialist methodology works by advancing a strategic agenda of obfuscation. If you are a small or intermediate country, you cannot just look at one issue at a time with China. You are forced to consider carefully your health, education, and economic infrastructure and decide if it is worth angering the source of much of your imports and economic aid.

²²⁶ Deutsche Welle, “Beijing Seeking to ‘change Facts’ in South China Sea: DW: 19.09.2014,” DW.COM, September 19, 2019, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/en/beijing-seeking-to-change-facts-in-south-china-sea/a-17935857>

²²⁷ James T. Areddy, “Xi Jinping Flexes China’s Trade Muscle with Visit to Rare-Earths Hub,” *The Wall Street Journal*, May 21, 2019, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/xi-jinping-flexes-china-s-trade-muscle-with-visit-to-rare-earths-hub-11558442724>

²²⁸ Phoebe Sedgman and Jing Li, “China Eyes Rare Earth Export Curbs for U.S. Defense, FT Says,” Bloomberg.com, February 16, 2021, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-02-16/china-eyes-rare-earth-export-curbs-for-u-s-defense-sector-ft-kl7l9uxb>

By becoming the manufacturing and export hub of the world, China has laid the long-term plans of being able to destabilize all of its trading partners and make them think with every decision, “Is it worth angering China?”. Indeed, this psychology runs so deep that many skip the “Are we angering China” question altogether and jump straight to the conclusion that there is no possible way that their country’s manufacturing could compete with China so why even try.²²⁹ They cede both comparative and competitive economic advantages without even trying.

The New Opium War

China has many legitimate grievances with the West. Probably the most understandable by all sides is the Opium Wars. The Chinese Qing Dynasty desired to stamp out the recreational use of opium that was being imported into China by the British and French in the mid-1800s. The colonial powers at the time did not agree with the Qing Dynasty’s desires and by force of arms compelled the Chinese to accept the India-produced opium in decidedly lopsided battles. For such a proud people and culture, these losses were not easily forgiven or forgotten. Now the tables have turned and have given a small glimpse into China’s neo-imperial tendencies and what China as a world hegemon might look like.

In the past decade, China has become the world leader in exporting ingredients for pharmaceutical use.²³⁰ Due to the massive amount of precursor materials and weak

²²⁹ Sheng Wen, “US, Handicapped by Systemic Woes, Cannot Compete with China,” *Global Times*, April 25, 2021, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202104/1221991.shtml>

²³⁰ Enoch Kariuki, “China: The Giant Has Awoken,” *PharmExec*, May 17, 2021, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.pharmexec.com/view/china-the-giant-has-awoken>

regulations, China has also become the largest exporter of synthetic opioids, the most common of which is fentanyl, to the rest of the world.²³¹ Chinese exporters provide the ingredients to distributors in North and South America which then pass them to gangs the complete the manufacturing process and smuggle the drug into America and Europe.²³² Furthermore, because of the difficulty in detecting the raw ingredients, they are often mailed directly into a country.²³³

Nearly 30,000 Americans die each year from China-sourced illegal opioid use and this has become a major source of contention between the U.S. and China.²³⁴ President Xi, in 2017, supposedly agreed to crack down on illegal Chinese suppliers of opioids exactly how that will be done is unclear.²³⁵ Chinese anti-opioid laws since that time are often very specific, meaning new types of recipes are created quicker than laws are, thus allowing a large and glaring loophole for this market that not only is lucrative for the Chinese but also does real damage to the West. Analysts have repeatedly indicated that

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Vanda Felbab-Brown, “Fentanyl and Geopolitics: Controlling Opioid Supply from China,” Brookings, November 06, 2020, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/fentanyl-and-geopolitics-controlling-opioid-supply-from-china/>

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ National Institute on Drug Abuse, “Overdose Death Rates,” National Institute on Drug Abuse, February 25, 2021, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.drugabuse.gov/drug-topics/trends-statistics/overdose-death-rates>

²³⁵ John Pomfret, “Why Is China Refusing to Stop the Flow of Fentanyl?” *The Washington Post*, March 4, 2019, accessed June 12, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/gdpr-consent/?next_url=https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/03/04/why-is-china-refusing-stop-flow-fentanyl/

the Chinese Government should close these loopholes by creating laws that are far more encompassing but Chinese regulators always find a reason not to do so.²³⁶

One of the huge advantages China has over competing nations is that profits, both the monetary kinds and the power kind, often trump people and in China local economic growth often trumps everything else and local party corruption is well known and rampant.²³⁷ When deciding between the death of an anonymous American drug user and local economic growth, a local party official will probably not have a hard time deciding what to do with a producer.

It cannot be said that the CCP is purposefully looking the other way or even encouraging the export of illegal drugs to the rest of the world for revenge, spite, or any other power-play reason. However, for a country that has a social credit system and boasts that it knows what everyone is doing at any given time,²³⁸ it makes one wonder why China cannot or is so slow in policing its pharmaceutical exports. In today's world, China cannot force open trading markets or even dictate trading terms by force of arms,

²³⁶ John Pomfret, "Why Is China Refusing to Stop the Flow of Fentanyl?" *The Washington Post*, March 4, 2019, accessed June 12, 2021, https://www.washingtonpost.com/gdpr-consent/?next_url=https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/03/04/why-is-china-refusing-stop-flow-fentanyl/

²³⁷ Brian Wallheimer, "Was China's Rapid Growth Built on Corruption?" *Chicago Booth Review*, April 29, 2019, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://review.chicagobooth.edu/economics/2019/article/was-china-s-rapid-growth-built-corruption>

²³⁸ Ross Andersen, "The Panopticon Is Already Here," *The Atlantic*, July 30, 2020, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/09/china-ai-surveillance/614197/>

but it can through economic foul play. In a China world order, it seems that China would choose to act like the imperialists of a bygone era.

Could It Get Worse?

Another preview of China-dominated norms is unfolding right now in the realm of vaccine diplomacy. Despite growing interest in the theory that COVID-19 began in a Chinese Government lab and was accidentally released through human error, the CCP spent nearly 6 weeks of the initial outbreak blaming and threatening others, hoarding medical supplies, and doing everything possible to make sure China came out ahead.²³⁹ China's Sinovac COVID-19 vaccine was one of the first developed in the world; however, the efficacy is amongst the lowest worldwide. But it has one advantage that many of the competitors do not - availability.²⁴⁰ Because of this, many developing countries have no choice but to seek out Sinovac as some percentage of efficacy is better than none. This is a huge win for China and deflects much of the COVID-19 blame. The Latin American Center at the Atlantic Council think tank published, "From a public relations standpoint, China has sought to shift the narrative from China being at the center of the COVID problem to China being at the center of the COVID solution."²⁴¹

²³⁹ Isabel Togoh, "China Covered Up Coronavirus to Hoard Medical Supplies, DHS Report Finds," *Forbes*, May 04, 2020, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/isabeltogoh/2020/05/04/china-covered-up-coronavirus-to-hoard-medical-supplies-dhs-report-finds/>

²⁴⁰ Smriti Mallapaty, "China's COVID Vaccines Are Going Global - but Questions Remain," *Nature News*, May 04, 2021, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-01146-0>

²⁴¹ Dan De Luce, "China Is Using Vaccines to Push Its Agenda in Latin America, and the U.S. Is behind the Curve, Experts Say," *NBCNews.com*, May 23, 2021, accessed

The CCP has the power to decide which countries get the Sinovac and which do not. Therefore, it can be assumed that countries that sided with China or at least follow China's lead will be the countries that receive the vaccine. In this, Brazil is an excellent case study. Brazil and China have had a complex history. China is a massive export market for Brazilian products like soybeans and the two countries seem content in the intergovernmental organization BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa).²⁴² Yet, Brazil has been very hesitant to allow Chinese telecommunications company Huawei to operate and build telecommunications infrastructure in Brazil because of security concerns.²⁴³ Although Huawei is nominally a private company, the Chinese Government often makes government-level threats of sanctions and reciprocity if Huawei is not allowed to operate in a given country.²⁴⁴ Which is odd for a country that will not allow foreign telecommunications companies to operate within its borders. With massive amounts of COVID-19 cases occurring in Brazil, President Bolsonaro felt he did not have a choice but to bend to Chinese demands - if Brazil wanted Sinovac, Huawei access to the Brazilian market was the price. To move to the front of the Sinovac line, Brazilian

June 12, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/china-using-vaccines-push-its-agenda-latin-america-u-s-n1268146>

²⁴² Alyssa Ayres, "How the BRICS Got Here," Council on Foreign Relations, August 31, 2017, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/how-brics-got-here>

²⁴³ Ernesto Londoño and Letícia Casado, "Brazil Needs Vaccines. China Is Benefiting.," *New York Times*, March 15, 2021, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/15/world/americas/brazil-vaccine-china.html>

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

regulators allowed Huawei to enter a bid for a Brazilian 5G infrastructure project to be decided later in 2021.²⁴⁵

But accepting Huawei was not the only term for getting the vaccine. President Bolsonaro seemingly also needed to walk back a statement critical of China that he had previously made, implicating China was using COVID-19 for its gain. President Bolsonaro stated,

It is a new virus; nobody knows if it was born in a laboratory or by a human being that ate an inadequate animal. But it is there. The military knows what chemical, bacteriological and radiologic war is. Aren't we facing a new war? Which country grew its GDP the most? I won't tell you.²⁴⁶

It would seem that he was referencing China. Evidentially, China thought so too. Shortly after President Bolsonaro made his comments, China restricted vaccines and vaccine ingredients to Brazil. When questioned about this, China's Ambassador to Brazil revealed, "The Sinovac raw material is ready and available in refrigerated containers, just waiting for the authorization of the Chinese Government."²⁴⁷ The only shortage of vaccines for the Brazilian people is an artificial one. The CCP was playing global power politics with vaccines and people's lives.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ricardo Della Coletta, "In A New Attack, Bolsonaro Suggests That China Is Waging a Biological War with Covid," *Folha De S.Paulo*, May 06, 2021, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/internacional/en/world/2021/05/in-a-new-attack-bolsonaro-suggests-that-china-is-waging-a-biological-war-with-covid.shtml>

²⁴⁷ Mauricio Savarese, "Sao Paulo Authorities Plead with China to Release Vaccines," *AP NEWS*, May 12, 2021, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/sao-paulo-china-coronavirus-pandemic-business-global-trade-b455cc11c8a971fd1b72230e3b6be7b3>

As of this study, President Bolsonaro has not bowed to Chinese demands but Sao Paulo Provincial Governor Doria did. After meeting with Chinese officials and officially condemning President Bolsonaro's remarks, Sao Paulo Province received a fresh supply of Sinovac.²⁴⁸

However, Brazil is not the only developing country that is being pressured by the CCP. According to anonymous sources, "Latin American officials say China has pushed their countries to cut ties with Taiwan in return for badly needed COVID-19 vaccines."²⁴⁹ Very few countries have official ties with Taiwan and the number grows smaller every year due to PRC influence. For example, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, and Panama have all recently dropped their recognition of Taiwan because "China has invested in ports, roads, dams, and railways, often offering loans to Latin American governments, and made big purchases of minerals and agricultural commodities."²⁵⁰ Additionally, the Latin American countries that do still recognize Taiwan, Honduras, and Paraguay, reportedly have not been offered Sinovac although all their neighboring countries have.²⁵¹

Of course, the Sinovac and the power games being played by the CCP with it are just a small part of larger influence operations. Possibly the largest influence operation is

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ De Luce.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Chase Harrison, "Vaccines Reignite China vs. Taiwan Debate in Latin America," AS/COA, May 12, 2021, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.as-coa.org/articles/vaccines-reignite-china-vs-taiwan-debate-latin-america>

the global supply chain. If a single country holds the majority of the means of production, it could have a lot of influence.

For years Western security and intelligence communities have been warning of the increasingly aggressive nature of Chinese actions in economics, business, and politics and that the West should not be ceding anything to China.²⁵² However, monetary-interest voices were louder and have been shaping the debate. Possibly the strongest argument is that it is too late to change the economic status quo now, the boat should not be rocked, China must be engaged with for economic reasons. However, COVID-19 has opened the door to a crack for those that are not okay with appeasing China. Even strong China engagement advocates have been hedging their bets.²⁵³ Decision-makers are starting to understand that it may not be possible to make money off of China while relying on the U.S. and other Western states for world order. Indeed, they are coming to the realization that to do so they may end up with little money and little world order as Chinese intellectual property theft and unfair trade advantages strips them of their economic and technological control. The Chinese parasitic production model will eventually kill the host.²⁵⁴

²⁵² VOA, “US Intelligence Warns China, Russia Determined to Erode Washington’s Influence,” Voice of America, April 13, 2021, accessed June 13, 2021, <https://www.voanews.com/usa/us-intelligence-warns-china-russia-determined-erode-washingtons-influence>

²⁵³ Steven Erlanger, “Global Backlash Builds Against China Over Coronavirus,” *New York Times*, May 03, 2020, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/03/world/europe/backlash-china-coronavirus.html>

²⁵⁴ Max Fisher, “Is the ‘China Model’ Failing?” *The Atlantic*, August 08, 2011, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/06/is-the-china-model-failing/240773/>

One example of a country that was fence-sitting and learned the hard way between the U.S. and China was France. In an attempt to hedge France's defense sector's bets, France willingly sold weapons to China. One French defense contractor stated that his country's competitive advantage was that they were willing to work with anyone, unlike the United States.²⁵⁵ Unfortunately for the French, much of the equipment they sold to China has now been reverse engineered and exact duplicates recently appeared in Myanmar. This has caused the French company's operations in Myanmar to cease and for the company to pull out altogether.²⁵⁶ They won the initial battle with quick money from China but lost the war due to their greed at the cost of their values.

But the French are not alone. Factions in all countries are willing to do business with authoritarian regimes because of the money involved. One example is the Fang Fang group at California Polytechnical University, infiltrating student organizations and controlling political discourse, and distorting the conversation around sensitive PRC topics like Hong Kong. It was known that they were a group run by the Chinese government, it was no secret, but the lure of money was too strong.²⁵⁷ The CCP understands that it will be difficult for the world to rally against it if it can sow confusion

²⁵⁵ VOA, "French Energy Company Suspends Payments to Myanmar Army," Voice of America, May 26, 2021, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/french-energy-company-suspends-payments-myanmar-army>

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Zach Dorfman and Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian, "Exclusive: How a Suspected Chinese Spy Gained Access to California Politics," Axios, December 08, 2020, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.axios.com/china-spy-california-politicians-9d2dfb99-f839-4e00-8bd8-59dec0daf589.html>

and dissension abroad. By keeping Americans arguing against each other or allies about what to do and how to do it, the CCP gains more time for itself.

The CCP would love nothing more than to disrupt the social interaction between Western countries and developing countries as this would be the beginning of the end for cohesive Western norms.²⁵⁸ China sees developing countries as its core patrons²⁵⁹ and does not want any competition for them. One of China's most effective ways of doing this is blaming the West for doing exactly what it is doing.²⁶⁰ Whether that be pushing false historical narratives, hyping an action as a threat that really is not a threat, or flat out lying.²⁶¹

Is It Working?

The CCP will celebrate its 100-year-anniversary on 1 July 2021 with the theme, "Follow the Party Forever."²⁶² The difference between this and other CCP anniversaries is the blatant use of mixing the CCP with religious iconography and language. "In Party literature and state media, former revolutionary bases are labeled 'holy sites,' and the almost obligatory visits to such locations by the rank and file are meant to 'baptize'

²⁵⁸ Steven Lee Myers, "An Alliance of Autocracies? China Wants to Lead a New World Order.," *New York Times*, March 29, 2021, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/29/world/asia/china-us-russia.html>

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Javier C. Hernández, "'Follow the Party Forever': China Plans a Communist Birthday Bash," *New York Times*, April 19, 2021, accessed June 12, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/19/world/asia/china-communist-party-anniversary.html>

members in the Communist faith.”²⁶³ One of the anniversary activities is an official poster series commemorating each year of the CCP. However, there is one year missing in the official press releases -1989. Perhaps the CCP believes that nothing of significance happened the year that the Tiananmen Square Massacre (a.k.a. Tiananmen Square protests and June Fourth Incident) occurred. Despite the CCP’s desire to bury the past, a former Chinese soldier on duty at Tiananmen Square recently noted that “China’s political education forces you to forget what happened in the past - forget the bad things that the Party did, and only remember the good things.”²⁶⁴ This type of whitewashing and censoring the past is not new inside of China and is quickly becoming the norm outside of China as well.²⁶⁵

Some of the world appears to have woken to the growing strength of China and the CCP’s economic, political, and military agenda. Countries no longer are blind and deaf to “China’s illegal seizure and militarization of contested islands in the South China Sea; its rapid military build-up and modernization program” including bases outside of China’s historical sphere of influence; increasingly hostile and provocative acts and talk against Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Xinjiang Province; economic colonization and debt-trap diplomacy of countries in South America, Africa, and South Asia via the Belt and Road Initiative; and, military incursions and actions in other countries’ borders.”²⁶⁶ Although

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Louisa Lim, *The Peoples Republic of Amnesia: Tiananmen Revisited* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.15.

²⁶⁵ Ibid. 17.

²⁶⁶ Cleo Paskal, “Indo-Pacific Strategies, Perceptions and Partnerships: The View from Seven Countries,” www.chathamhouse.org, March 2021, accessed June 12, 2021,

many countries began to push back against Beijing pre-COVID-19, the pandemic has enhanced the spotlight on China, there is no homogeneous understanding of what to do about it.²⁶⁷

Up until this time, China has had a relatively easy growth from a developing country to nascent world power. This was primarily due to the unorganized Western response to China's growing power and monied interests. However, since revelations about the origin of COVID-19 and China's neo-imperial expansion in all corners of the globe, country-specific internal divisions between engagement-favoring political and economic factions and defense and security factions seem to be shrinking.²⁶⁸ Beyond individual countries' internal politics regarding China, there seems to be "a new round of international partnerships beyond China's orbit. From economic alliances to" defense and security coalitions.²⁶⁹

Shortly after assuming the U.S. presidency, President Biden held a virtual multilateral meeting with India, Japan, and Australia, known as the Quad. The Quad is nominally a quasi-official defense partnership aimed at countering China's rise, although it also tackles other non- defense issues like climate change and vaccine diplomacy, non-defense issues in which China also is pushing hard.²⁷⁰ These are not incidental issues and

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/2021-03-22-indo-pacific-strategies-paskal.pdf>, p.5.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 32.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 24.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 27.

²⁷⁰ Derek Grossman, "The Quad Is Poised to Become Openly Anti-China Soon," RAND Corporation, July 28, 2020, accessed June 13, 2021,

many developing countries feel like China is their only option in non-defense matters. But nothing comes for free. Chinese aid now will have a cost later for these countries and these soft power advances are part of China's comprehensive plans and power projection.

Even when China is not using subterfuge to find a way to dominate, it struggles. It has recently entered into a series of trade agreements with Australia, Japan, and New Zealand that seem beneficial to all involved as long as all countries live up to their commitments.²⁷¹ However, critics of these deals point out that these agreements can go wrong quickly and are terrible and that it was the Chinese side that insisted that the agreements be so watered-down and lacking rules for disputes resolution that they are meaningless.²⁷²

More recently, U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai had this to say about China after a meeting with Chinese Vice Premier Liu He, "If China cannot or will not adapt to international rules and norms, we must be bold and creative in taking steps to level the playing field and enhance our capabilities and partnerships."²⁷³ Nevertheless, the U.S. needs more of the world to make these kinds of statements if it hopes to slow China down.

<https://www.rand.org/blog/2020/07/the-quad-is-poised-to-become-openly-anti-china-soon.html>

²⁷¹ Paskal, 15.

²⁷² Ibid., 21.

²⁷³ USTR, "Testimony of Ambassador Katherine Tai at a Senate Finance Committee Hearing on the President's Trade Agenda," United States Trade Representative, May 12, 2021, accessed June 13, 2021, <https://ustr.gov/about-us/policy-offices/press-office/press-releases/2021/may/testimony-ambassador-katherine-tai-senate-finance-committee-hearing-presidents-trade-agenda-0>

Conclusion

Despite multiple setbacks, China has amazingly continued on a steady rise in the international sphere, becoming a power beyond East Asia. Even during a global pandemic, China has not let up on its goals and its methods of achieving them. The word “brilliance” does not do justice to China’s rise. It has absorbed Hong Kong 30 years faster than expected, and supposedly legally allowed; openly began military movements intended to lay the groundwork for invading Taiwan; and, brazenly has militarily crossed internationally-recognized borders and seized territory and killed foreign troops²⁷⁴ with little to no pushback by the totality of the international community. China’s actions to grow its power fall within the definition of neo-imperialism or “...territorial acquisitions... building their empires with new technological advances and developments, expanding their territory through conquest, and exploiting the resources of the subjugated countries.”²⁷⁵ Nevertheless, China’s dominance in supply chains and economic considerations are the largest hindrances in stopping the rest of the world from trying to curb this behavior.²⁷⁶

“It seems less of an issue to rock the economic boat if that boat is already sinking.”²⁷⁷ China’s actions, culminating with COVID-19, may have been a breaking point for many countries, to the point where economic “decoupling from China can

²⁷⁴ Paskal, 6.

²⁷⁵ Wikipedia, “New Imperialism,” Wikipedia, June 09, 2021, accessed June 13, 2021, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Imperialism

²⁷⁶ Paskal, 22.

²⁷⁷ Ibid. 25.

appear relatively minor in comparison.”²⁷⁸ Examples of the first signs of this from the U.S. are the use of the Defense Production Act to kickstart portions of the supply chain for critical items that were once ceded to China, the reversal of Hong Kong’s special economic status, and the change in financial regulations specifically to target Chinese businesses listed on U.S. stock markets. Previous to the pandemic, it was difficult to challenge China over both its ambitions and the methods to reach those ends as China had built itself a cadre of client states that would protect China.²⁷⁹

Much like the Cold War world, it feels like countries will need to choose between the U.S. or China, that the days of playing one against the other but maintain robust relations with both may be coming to an end. However, more study and more quantitative data are needed to fully understand China’s ambitions. Because the internal machinations of China are so difficult to detect, understand, and research from a Western perspective, it is problematic to properly forecast Chinese intentions without a fair amount of cognitive bias and heuristics. What is clear though is the world can expect more economic and military expansion and whitewash from China, both its history and that of other countries, as China continues its neo-imperial actions as it tries to change global norms and values.

Global attention has shifted from the West to China. China’s next moves will determine whether it ascends to power status or whether its reach exceeds its grasp

²⁷⁸ Ibid. 25.

²⁷⁹ Ibid. 25.

causing a backlash from its seemingly neo-imperialist actions that hope to breakdown the West's values-based world order and rebuild it in the CCP's image.

Conclusion: “Be extremely subtle even to the point of formlessness. Be extremely mysterious even to the point of soundlessness. Thereby you can be the director of the opponent’s fate.”²⁸⁰

Where are We Now?

This paper has put forward many arguments around the true nature of the CCP, its propaganda campaigns, and its threat to not just the West but the entire world. The CCP is a neo-fascist and neo-imperialist regime with dreams of global hegemony. To achieve its desire of becoming the world’s hegemon and replacing current global norms with that of its own, it has interfered in the domestic politics of other countries, created vassal states and neo-feudal systems, and has attempted to influence local, state, and federal elections in the United States. The case studies, anecdotes, and circumstantial evidence are clear in those regards. However, what is still needed is quantitative evidence, objective measurements that are not subject to bias, and non-cognitive manipulation. There is room for more research and study and the timeframe requirement is now before the West sacrifices its values for promises of economic growth that are bound to the whims of the CCP.

The West still holds out hope for China. That with a little more patience, a little more accommodation, the CCP will understand that its ideology has been a dead man walking for the past 100 years. China views the West as its adversary for its Century of Humiliation and its denying the CCP of what it believes is its rightful place at the head of

²⁸⁰ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Goodreads, accessed July 05, 2021, https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/1771.Sun_Tzu.

all nations. China seeks to stamp out and destroy the current systems. While the West, on the other hand, sees China as a competitor,²⁸¹ a strategic foe to go back and forth with.

The United States, specifically, has done everything it can to normalize relations with China, pushing for WTO and Most Favored Nation trade status. China has welcomed this and used it to its advantage. Despite constant strategic threats, implied and actual, by the CCP, even President Biden has given China one pass after another.²⁸² Indeed, the political and economic elite in America has done more than just give China a pass, they actively attacked anyone that speaks differently. President Trump was derided for his actions against China, not on policy differences but that China could be a problem at all.²⁸³ The same is true for previous academics who dared raise their voices in counter to Chinese actions in their schools and the media. Furthermore, whenever China broke international promises or violated global norms, instead of standing up for Western values, politicians dithered and let themselves be cowed by Chinese threats. These elites did these things despite China rejecting Western engagement and the global norms that allowed it to advance so quickly.

A Hybrid Model

The PRC has taken the most effective parts of various authoritarian political models and mixed them with the most effective parts of economic capitalism to create a

²⁸¹ Adam Edelman, “Biden's Comments Downplaying China Threat to U.S. Fire up Poles on Both Sides,” NBCNews.com, May 02, 2019, accessed July 08, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2020-election/biden-s-comments-downplaying-china-threat-u-s-fires-poles-n1001236>.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid.

system that will not go away soon or easily. When China first rolled out its “one country, two systems” policy in the late 1990s it was immediately lauded as a victory for the West. China, it seemed, was well on its way to eschewing communism for the benefits of Western capitalism and liberal democracy. Certainly, once the Chinese populace got a taste of the West, the CCP would fall. Yet, the China Model has been impervious to democratic gains and has possibly fallen further away on the right-left spectrum of political theory.

The first signs of China’s newfound status can be traced to the 2009 World Economic Forum in Davos. Here, shortly after the Financial Crisis, the world’s elite politicians and economic minds were blasted by first-time attendee Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao. Wen concluded that if the world was to avoid a financial disaster like 2008 again, it needed to embrace the Chinese political-economic model.²⁸⁴ In 2012, China showed the world what it could do and what it was willing to do by physically expanding into the South China Sea by claiming and militarizing islands in other countries’ exclusive economic zones and publicly rolling out the BRI a year later in 2013. The world was on notice, you are either with China or against them.

Elites quickly joined. Esteemed *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman called the CCP an “enlightened group of people” whose use of authoritarianism was a “great advantage” over the slow plodding of democracy.²⁸⁵ Economists of note opined

²⁸⁴ World Economic Forum, “Davos Annual Meeting 2009 - Wen Jiabao,” YouTube, January 28, 2009, accessed June 26, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rs9fqfvYiXw>.

²⁸⁵ Thomas L. Friedman, “Our One-Party Democracy,” *The New York Times*, September 09, 2009, accessed June 26, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/09/opinion/09friedman.html>.

that perhaps the economic model of the Washington Consensus had run its course and should be replaced by the Beijing Consensus.²⁸⁶ The Chinese seized upon this Western vacillation to forcefully push their agenda via the West's media. Of course, the cost in terms of values and freedoms was never discussed or considered. If the CCP was publicly considered a fascist party, support for anything related would fall quickly.

From the end of World War II until the 2008 Financial Crisis, liberal democracy and capitalism were the order of the day. Even when capitalism failed to achieve optimal results, most countries did not consider the U.S.S.R.'s alternative economic plan as a valid choice, certainly not countries in the heart of the West. The rallying cry of the West was "freedom" and "democracy." It appears now for many elites, that those have a price.

Unlike the U.S.S.R., China has shown that its system works as a valid economic system for rapid modernization, growth, and a way to lift millions out of poverty. Or at least it works if the rest of the world plays along with China's rules, harkening back to traditional tribute models. It is unclear how long China could achieve its impressive economic growth numbers if IP theft and technology transfer were not happening or if China ceased to have primacy in manufacturing. Nevertheless, the CCP has proven its model is successful though it probably has more to do with its unique circumstances including' geography, demographics and population, and politics.

²⁸⁶ Yasheng Huang, "Debating China's Economic Growth: The Beijing Consensus or The Washington Consensus.," *Academy of Management Perspectives* 24, no. 2 (May 01, 2010): accessed June 26, 2021, doi:10.5465/amp.2010.51827774, p.35.

However, unlike capitalism and the theories of competitive and comparative advantages that teach that economics is a non-zero-sum game, for the China Model, there can be only one winner. The Chinese model would not work if every country tried to be like China. The Chinese historical tribute model only works if it is the only country receiving tribute. Nevertheless, the thought of economic growth with Chinese money blinds many countries, including Western, to the true cost of such get-rich-quick schemes.

Every move the CCP makes is an attempt to strengthen itself. As noted earlier, Xi told the military to support the Party, not the country, not the people, not China's constitution, but the Party. If every domestic move the CCP makes is to strengthen its power, it follows that every international relationship is for the benefit of the Party. The China Model does not operate on a fair and open basis, it would not work if it did and it would not work if every country did it.

The China Model is nothing more than using the West's own values, institutions, and economic interests against itself. China complains broadly when it feels other countries are interfering in its domestic affairs but does not hesitate to interfere in other countries' internal affairs. Likewise, China is quick to run to intergovernmental organizations when it believes it is aggrieved but discounts the authority of those same bodies when China is the defendant. Furthermore, in the business realm, China insists on advantages for Chinese firms and businesses both at home and abroad. Whether that be in the form of Party members having seats on company boards, technology transfer, IP sharing, or forcing Chinese businesses upon another country. All these things are to

strengthen the CCP, not to advance human rights or lift people out of poverty. If those things do occur, it is strictly a byproduct.

However, as this paper makes clear, the China Model, which is now a synonym for fascism and neo-imperialism, is a means to the end of CCP dominance, and democratic countries are aiding China's rise at all costs methods. There is hardly a Western country that China is not currently censoring or threatening for some reason, usually coming down to giving China an advantage in some area. Beyond the current examples in Chapter 3, Australia has found that China is committing genocide against Uighur Muslims and meddled in Australia's democratic process. But before Australia could enact counter-policies, China had already labeled Australia as a whole as racist, Sino-phobic, and interfering in Chinese domestic affairs, as well as generating economic sanctions against Australia.²⁸⁷

Time is on China's Side

Some countries and elites are starting to believe, whether that be through coercion or not, in China. And the longer this goes on, the easier it will be for Chinese norms to become the norm. This soft-power projection and slowly but surely norm changing is highlighted by the use of foreign elites, institutions, and media to spread positive messages about China. The flagship of China's foreign influence and propaganda methods is the CCP controlled and funded Confucius Institutes that have taken root in

²⁸⁷ Tom Flanagan, "'Evil Racism': Chinese State Media Accuses Australia of White Supremacy," Yahoo! News, February 23, 2021, accessed June 26, 2021, <https://au.news.yahoo.com/chinese-state-media-accuses-australia-white-supremacy-041403778.html>.

nearly every major American and Western university. Year over year since 2009, China has given more in foreign aid, which the CI program falls under than the World Bank.

This investment is starting to show dividends for China. One real-world example is Venezuela. Every time it seems the ruling regime has tipped too far and will fall; Chinese loans and aid have kept the regime in power.²⁸⁸ This model is repeated throughout the world. Struggling regimes receive an economic lifeline in the short-term often at long-term rates that are unsustainable and China reaps the rewards. As one Indonesian politician explained, “There are, of course, no official statements from Southeast Asian countries about their decisions to follow the Beijing Consensus or not. The attraction to the Chinese Model is unconscious.”²⁸⁹ The attraction is automatic. The terms at the beginning are too good to even think about the future.

Wibowo worried that many countries, envying China’s economic growth, “have shifted their development strategy from one based on free markets and democracy to one based on semi-free markets and illiberal political systems. Most Southeast Asian countries have moved in the direction of China and away from liberal democracy over the past decade.”²⁹⁰ China is winning the influence war and concerningly, Wibowo found

²⁸⁸ Igor Patrick and Lucas Wosgrau Padilha, “China’s Stakes in Venezuela Are Too High to Be Ignored,” JIA SIPA, February 13, 2021, accessed June 26, 2021, <https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/online-articles/chinas-stakes-venezuela-are-too-high-be-ignored>.

²⁸⁹ Joshua Kurlantzick, “Why the ‘China Model’ Isn’t Going Away,” The Atlantic, March 21, 2013, accessed June 27, 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/03/why-the-china-model-isnt-going-away/274237/>.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

that two of the most changed portions of political control were moving from a system of multi-parties to one-party dominance and politicizing the judiciary.²⁹¹

The China Model of trying to return to the Middle Kingdom via tributes, neo-imperialism, and fascist nationalist traits has many flaws, including allowing and in some cases promoting official corruption, the lack of checks-and-balances which moderates parties, and a belief that ideology is more important than anything else. These are the downfalls of many autocratic regimes but despite these problems, China has seen tremendous growth in money and power on the world stage.

The West should take some, if not most, of the blame for allowing China to succeed economically while not changing politically. China is just using the same tactics the previous imperialists have used against it but using the economy rather than force of arms. Every time the West allows China to steal IP, censor itself in fear of angering China in the realm of human rights or kowtow to Chinese non-reciprocal demands it strengthens China's will, influence, and power to set new global norms or at the very least ignore the present norms.

The Great Awakening?

China's increasingly aggressive foreign relations have caused some push back and countries are starting to realize the true cost of China's largesse. It is possible that Chinese norms and models will not overtake those of global and Western norms in the next decade. The world is too diverse and the challenges are too extreme for one system to take total control. If this were not true, Western values would have a monopoly and there would be no discussion of a Chinese Model.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

Modern Chinese political ideology and actions can no longer be ignored in today's world. Its desire to control every facet of Chinese life and increase the lives of non-Chinese, government-sponsored racism and ethnic superiority and intense nationalism mixed with a one-party rule are stark reminders of fascist and imperial regimes of the past. These similarities need to be studied more by researchers and academics that have guarantees against Chinese retribution and censorship.

Chinese censorship has reached America and even its rural communities. China continues to use the American media against itself in an attempt to influence federal-level policies by planting stories, censoring content, and financially supporting American media and educational institutions. However, it is difficult to precisely determine what effects, if any, Chinese propaganda efforts in the U.S. have had on elections and policies. More studies and larger studies with quantitative analysis are needed.

Many Westerners do not want the open-ended and one-sided appeasement of China to end. This makes sense as they are the ones making money from the current arrangement. However, it must be done. The engagement policies set forth by the Nixon arrival in Beijing were built on a foundation of half-truths and false promises that China would join the world order and its norms, not seek to overthrow it and create its own. With China's belief in its divine mandate zero-sum game, that it was and is destined to once again become the center of the world, the West must either abandon its values and norms or abandon China until it changes itself. China has long held that it is at war with the United States, eventually, the U.S. and the West will either understand and fight or submit. If China does not change its zero-sum mentality the world order system and the global norms built around human rights are at stake.

There is a myriad of policy prescriptions that individual governments could take in addressing Chinese behavior but the first step is to publicly label China's actions for what they are at a global level: manipulative, deceitful, harmful, and imperialist. If China is acting in a fascist manner, it should be noted. If China is acting illegally, it should be brought before a court. Public opinion is the best regulator of a regime that is desperately attempting to keep the Mandate of Heaven.

Once China is judged and publicly shamed by the international community by its actions, not just its words, China will need to confront its actions which will be to the benefit of the global community and established norms and values. By ignoring these, China will be emboldened and will speed up its efforts to overthrow current systems. The West's model might not produce the economic gains of China but the externality values and freedoms are worth the cost. "Where there is [freedom], the governors must live in constant awe of the opinions of the governed."²⁹²

In his seminal piece regarding the triumph of liberal democracy and capitalism over fascism and communism, *The End of History*, Francis Fukuyama wrote, "It matters very little what strange thoughts occur to people in Albania or Burkina Faso for we are interested in what one could in some sense call the common ideological heritage of mankind."²⁹³ Unfortunately for Fukuyama, China is not Albania or Burkina Faso and any "strange thoughts" that China has do matter. "Strange thoughts" like China could merge capitalism into its political system rather than succumbing to liberal democracy. This

²⁹² Thomas Babington Macaulay Macaulay, *Thackerays History of the Earl of Chatham* (Boston, MA: Charles Bowen, 1834), 23.

²⁹³ Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest*, no. 16 (1989): accessed August 3, 2021, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24027184>, 9)

“strange thought” is only strange because Fukuyama seems guilty of the cognitive bias of mirror imaging, expecting China to act as America would act and how much of the world was acting to the shock of a suddenly unipolar world. It is “strange” to Western thinkers but not to Chinese thinkers whose very lives depended on thinking outside the Western way of thinking or they would meet the same fate as Soviet Communist members.

Perhaps Westerners should have “strange thoughts” before it is too late. Here is one example: China, under the CCP, will not become more politically liberal. On the contrary, with increasing political partisanship and ethnic and national tribal and clannish culture, the U.S. may become more like China.

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Curriculum Vita

James L. Hill was born on 31 May 1978 in the rural farming community of Panaca in southern Nevada. He attended Dixie State University, Brigham Young University, and American Military University where he received, respectively, his Associate of Arts in Computer Science in 1999, Bachelor of Arts double major in International Law and Asian Studies in 2003, and Master of Arts in Security Studies in 2010. He, his wife, and six children have roamed around the globe residing in Canberra, Australia (2006-2010); Manila, Philippines (2012-2015); Kabul, Afghanistan (2015-2016 and 2019-2020); and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (2016-2019); amongst United States locations. They currently live in La Paz, Bolivia.